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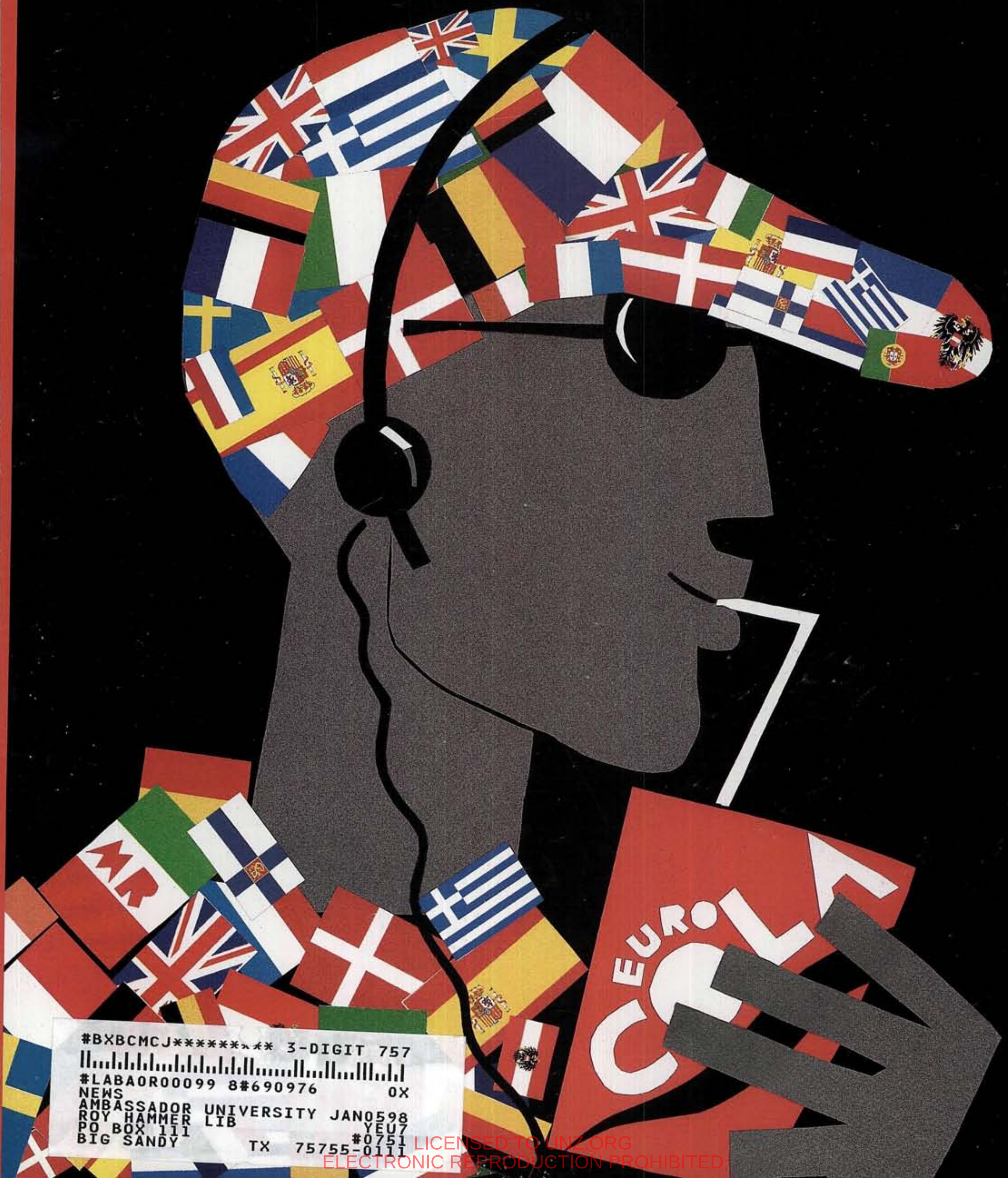

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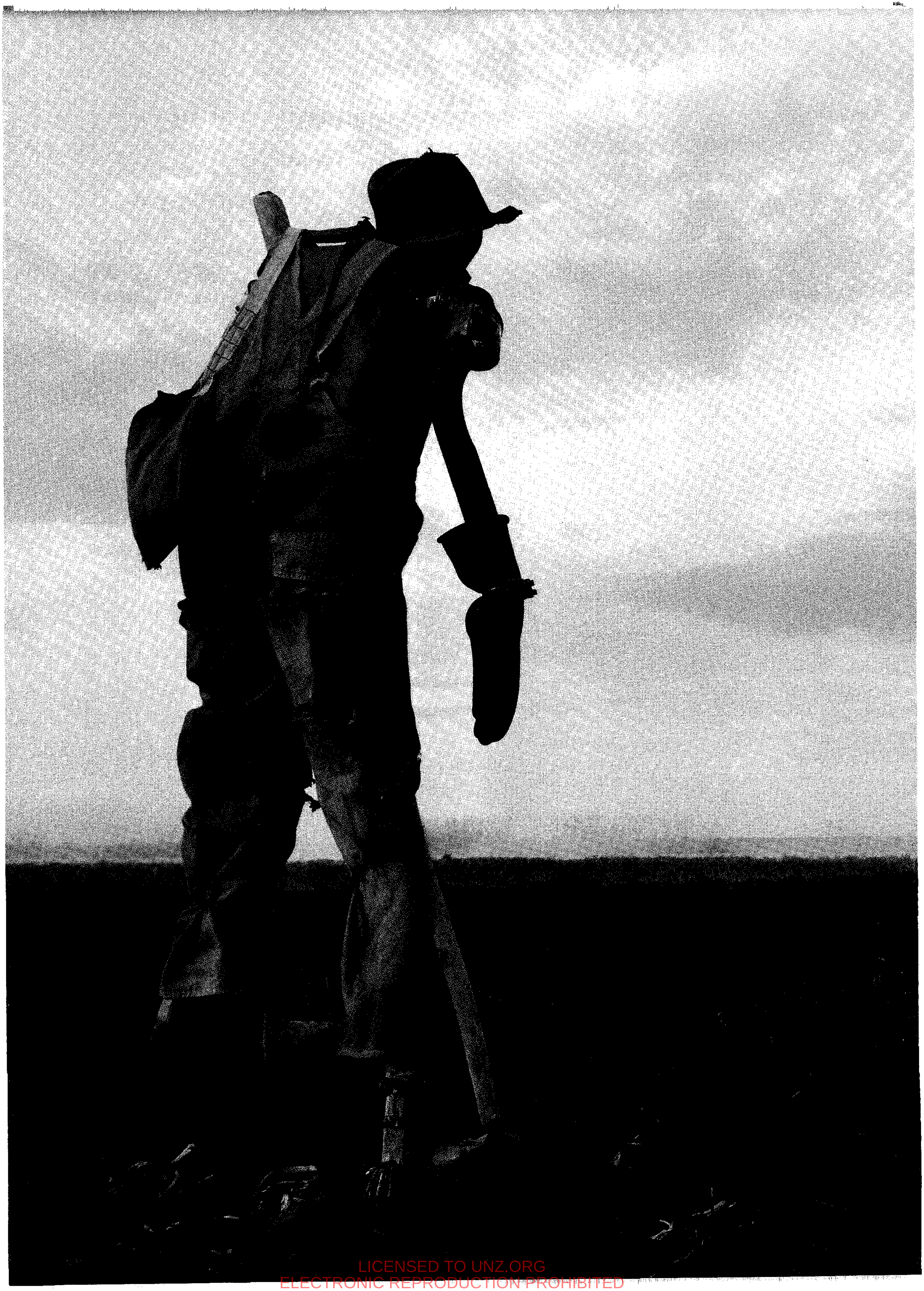

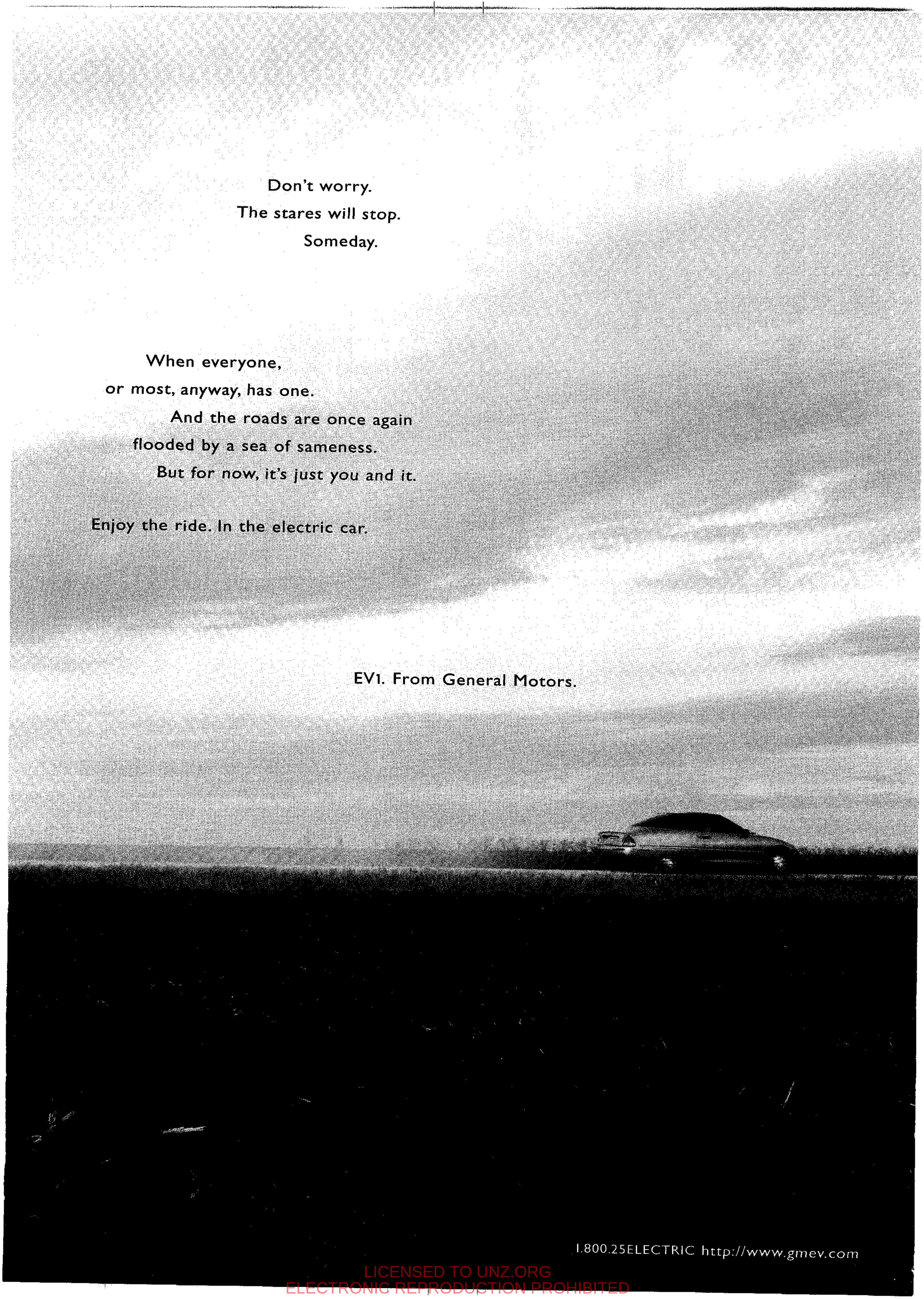

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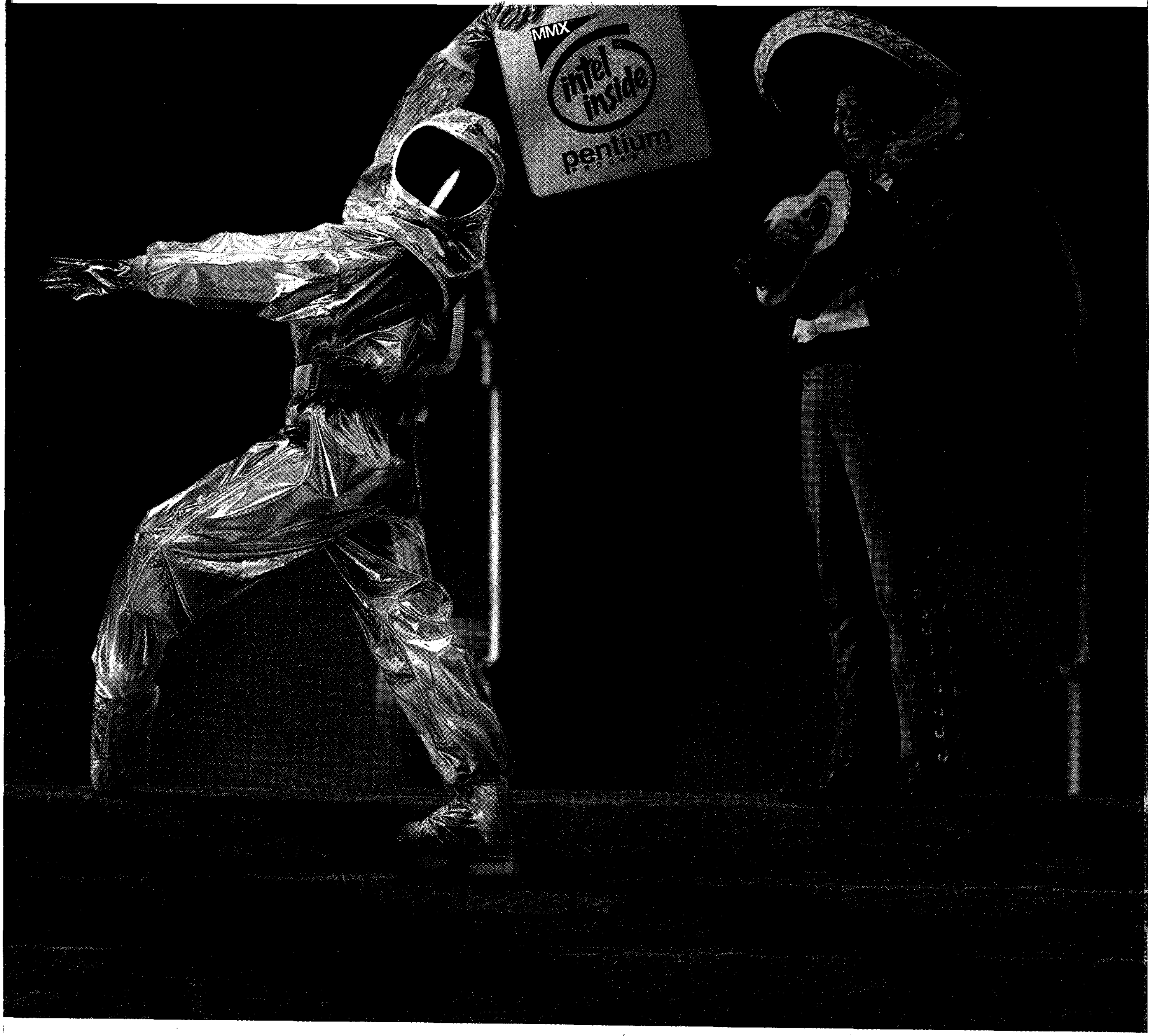
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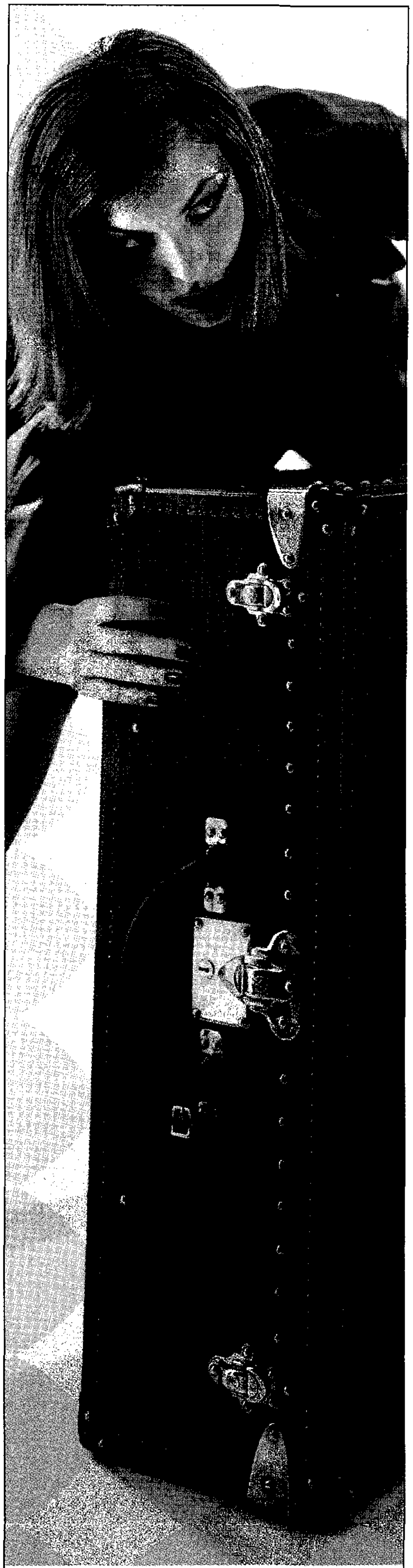

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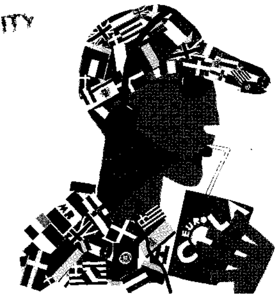

THE NEW YORKER
SPECIAL EUROPE ISSUE

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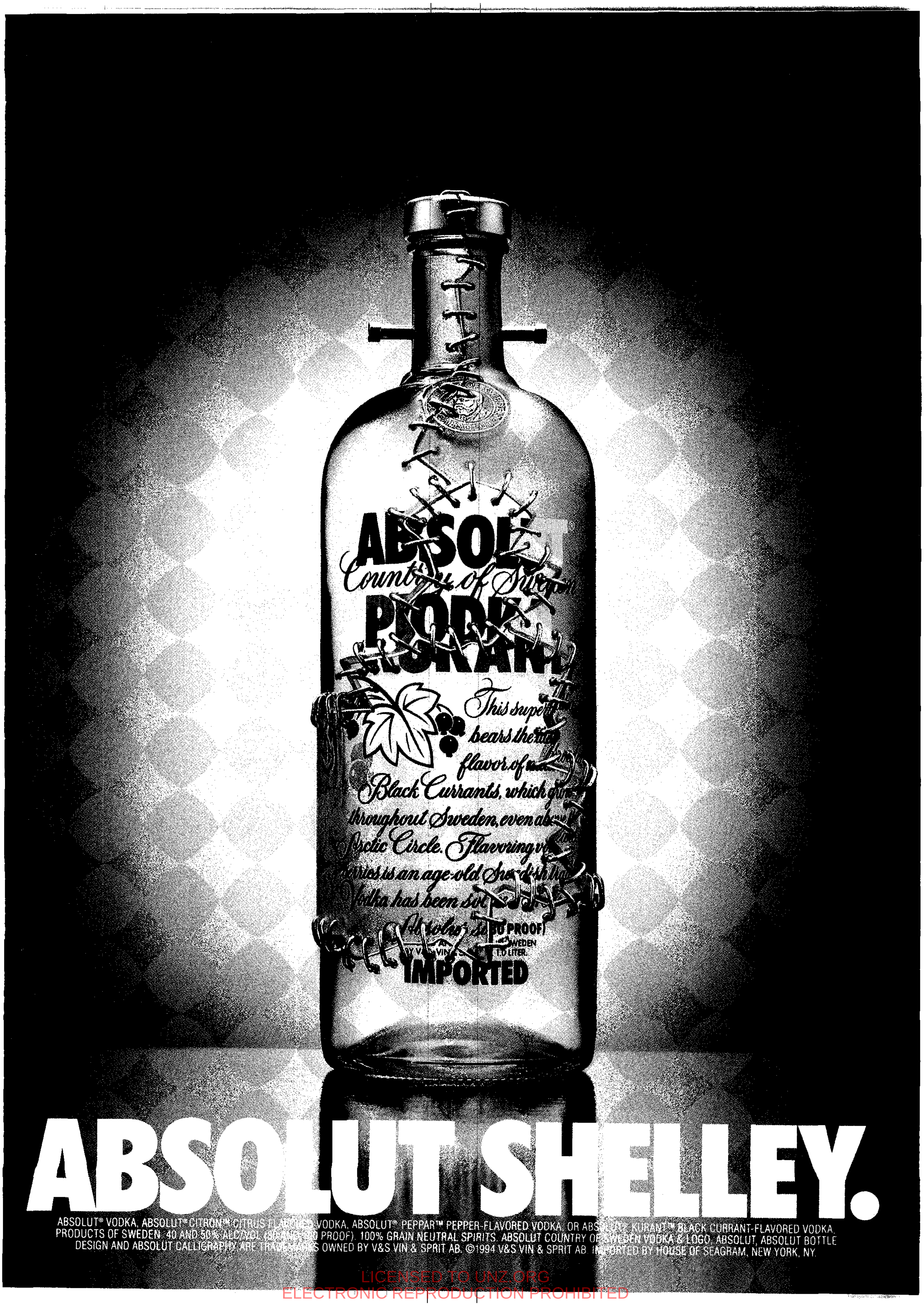
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COMMENT

EUROPE: AN INTRODUCTION

After so much glorious carnage, a miraculously mundane peace.

SUPPOSE the world were an animal curled up into a ball, like a threatened armadillo, and you wanted to blow its brains out: the best way to do so would be to put the barrel of your gun against Europe and pull the trigger. The United States might be nettled by this dubious favoritism; in the century now waning, it has been called upon to save Europe from itself twice—three times if you count Stalin's opportunistic incursion. But even the United States would have to admit, if pressed, that it is itself a largely European creation, a giant offshoot of the most productive piece of geography in the planet's history. Behind that admission would be a tacit acknowledgment that, although America may have the power, the energy, and most of the money, Europe has the pedigree. As David Copperfield (the Broadway illusionist, not the Dickens character) is reported to have said to Claudia Schiffer while they were touring the Louvre and reading the dates on the paintings, "Talk about your *old!*"

As a word, Europe goes back a long way: Assyrian inscriptions speak of the difference between *asu* (where the sun rises; i.e., Asia) and *ereb* (where it sets). As a place, Europe is old even by the standards of dynastic China and Pharaonic Egypt. As an idea, though, Europe is comparatively new: the word European didn't turn up in the language of diplomacy until the nineteenth century, and to *think* of Europe as one place had always taken some kind of supervening vision. Whatever unity existed within it came not through a unifying idea but through the exercise of power, and did not last.

The Pax Romana prevailed for more than two centuries: it left us the Latin language and all its rich derivatives, and it left us the law—and slavery, and militarism. Erasmus the wandering scholar was at home everywhere he went in Europe, but his wanderings were forced on him, and his humanism would have died young if he had been caught napping where the knives were out. The university system pioneered the notion of intellectual unity, but intellectual was all that it was. Dante spent the best years of his life in exile: a member of a political faction, he was exiled from his beloved Florence not by another faction but by another faction of the *same* faction. The Church united Europe in the one faith—Christendom is a peaceful-sounding word—but finally the faith itself split. Nothing could stop the rise of the nation-states, or stop them from fighting once

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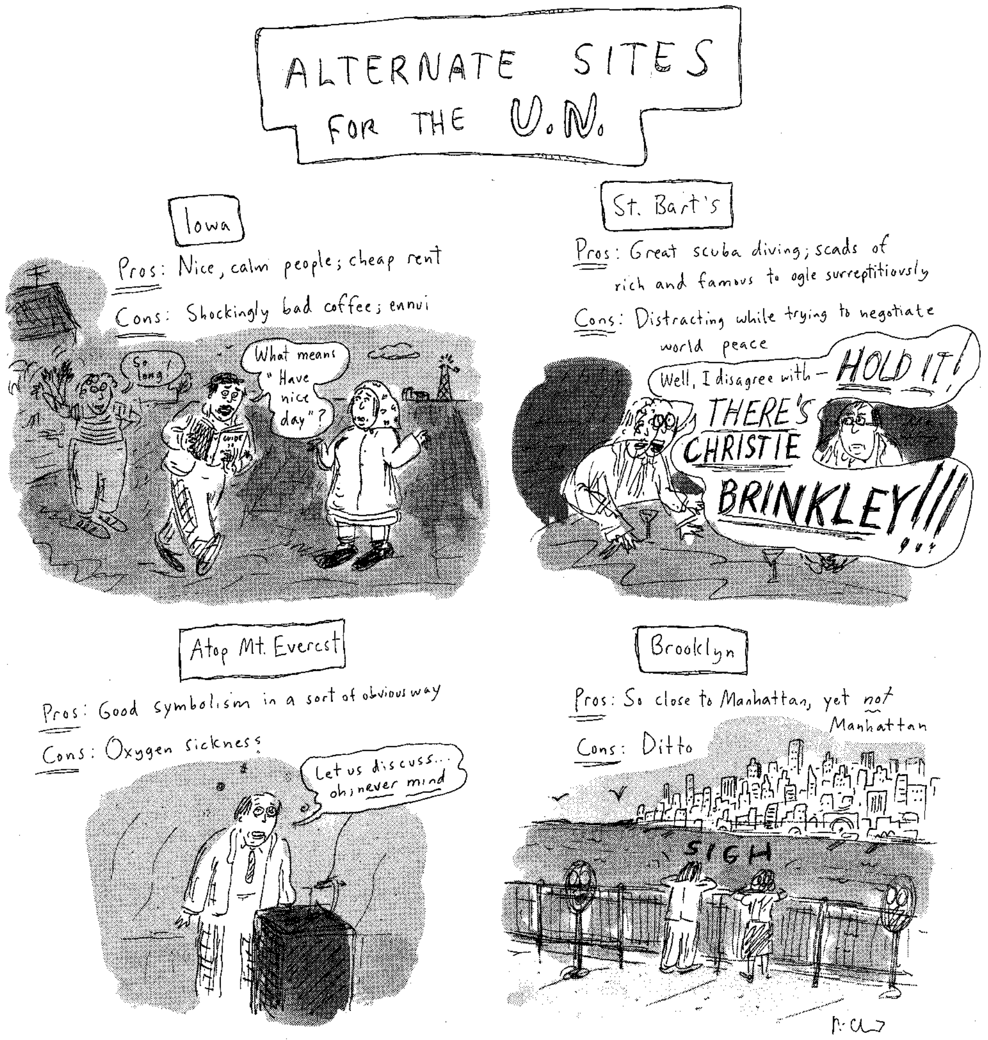
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Cons: Ditto
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they had arisen. And those states whose destiny it was to fight one another had been forged from fiefdoms and principalities that had warred upon one another, from walled cities that had laid siege to one another, and from fortified hill towns that had laid siege to one another for the valleys in between. The colossal efforts of Charlemagne, Louis XIV, and Napoleon—though they gave us, respectively, the restoration of learning, the apex of the comfortable arts, and the crucial new reality of the career open to the talents—all depended on military might. Kaiser Wilhelm II's similar dreams seem more explicitly violent only in having left behind little that was constructive; and Hitler's demented venture, though it united an unprecedentedly large proportion of Europe, left nothing in its wake—nothing except destruction, and this: the idea of European unity stopped being an intoxicating vision and started being a mundane necessity.

The centrifugal effect of the Nazi regime in Germany scattered the best brains of Europe all over the planet. Exiled to faraway New Zealand, the philosopher Karl Popper developed his argument that there could be no such thing as universal fixes—that the most that society could or should hope to do was to correct specific abuses. This perception surely applies to a united Europe: speculation about what utopian goals it might achieve counts for little beside a firm grasp of what it sets out to avoid—any recurrence of the internecine conflict that was already ancient when Athens fought Sparta and that reached its hideous apotheosis in the Second World War. In the middle of the twentieth century, it had become plain for all to see that Europe's glories—justly renowned even when they had to be rebuilt stone by stone—were merely its structure. Beneath them was the infrastructure—a network of burial mounds linked by battlefields—and it stank of blood. Hegel said that history was the story of liberty becoming conscious of itself. European history has culminated—at last, and in our time—with Europe becoming frightened of itself.

As happens so frequently in human affairs, fear has accomplished what neither reason nor culture ever could. Cultural unity was no illusion—had it been one, Hitler would not have been so eager to dispel it—but cultural unity had not been enough. When the musicians played for Mengele in Auschwitz, it did not mean that art and civilization added up to nothing, but it did mean that they did not add up to everything. Beside the broken bodies of the tortured innocent, the life of the mind was felt to be irrelevant—as, indeed, in any forced comparison it is.

To make sure that no such forced comparison happens again is the task in hand. It is not an easy one. In place of the conquerors' fevered dream of a Europe united by the sword, the peaceful commercial republics of the New Europe make do with such cultural manifestations as the Eurovision Song Contest—a kitschy classic that every year draws a huge television audience, whose more sophisticated members amuse each other with jokes about how dumb it is. The jokes keep changing. For years, Norway's songs reliably lost ("*Norvége* . . . nul points"); then they started winning. More recently, much derisive hilarity has attended the earnest efforts of Turkey. Between laughs, though, the less sophisticated but more thoughtful viewers should take heart: there was a time when the Turks stood at the gates of Vienna and bristled with the armed intention of getting into Europe by less tuneful means.

What the snobs are really afraid of is a United States of Europe that mirrors what they imagine the United States of America to be: an agglomerate dissolved into homogeneity, a consumer society consumed by mediocrity, or, at best, a mindless mimicry of Euro-savvy in which a dauntingly exact copy of Michelangelo's David presides over Forest Lawn's departed Angelenos and an actual-size Parthenon wows visitors to Nashville. But they are wrong about America, which is more than that; and they are wrong about the New Europe, which, as the millennium looms, bids fair to attain a last, unprecedented, and very welcome greatness, through a just peace. Talk about your new! —CLIVE JAMES

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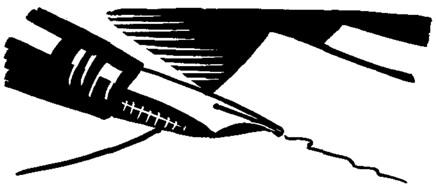

CINEMATIC SCIENCE

John Cassidy's "Chaos in Hollywood" (March 31st) makes it clear that science cannot explain whether a movie will be a hit or a flop. Yet, as the former assistant to the vice-president of production at a major studio, I know that this doesn't prevent studio executives from adhering to a strict science when they're deciding whether to pursue a project. The factors they weigh, in descending order of importance, are: whether another studio is interested in it; whether a major talent is attached to it; whether a major director is attached to it; whether a major writer has written it; whether a major production company is shopping it; and, finally, whether it's any good.

BRANDON MOGLEN
Brentwood, Calif.

THOSE ELOQUENT EUROPEANS

John Updike discusses the language of automobiles in "Car Talk" (Shouts & Murmurs, March 31st)—a short toot means "Hi there!"; a longer honk says "I hate you"; and flashing your lights signals "You go first." I have the utmost respect for John Updike, but his semantics of the automobile is a little elementary. If he's really interested in the subject, he should visit Italy. Cars here don't talk. They whisper. They shout. They complain, implore, weep, and proclaim every possible nuance of emotion. I've met taxi-drivers in Rome who could communicate displeasure or sympathy through their car horns. And somewhere in Naples a virtuoso is rehearsing a vehicular version of Dante's Inferno.

BEPPE SEVERGNINI
Milan, Italy

PRESS CONFERENCE

Kurt Andersen's article on James Fallows, the new editor of *U.S. News & World Report* ("The Outsider," March 31st), includes one direct reference to us that requires clarification. A *U.S. News* writer, self-described as a friend of ours, accuses us of "just plugging holes" by promoting from within when someone left the magazine, rather than bringing in new blood. The fact is that many talented people were hired during our time as co-editors of *U.S. News*, but for several years each required a special dispensation, since we were under a hiring freeze. It might have helped had Andersen talked to us about the seven years we edited the magazine, or at least made the effort to do so. He did neither.

MICHAEL RUBY
MERRILL MCLOUGHLIN
Washington, D.C.

Is it possible that the Bloomberg terminal was having a bad day when it produced an analysis of Dow Jones & Company for Ken Auletta's March 10th story, "The Bloomberg Threat"? By our reckoning, Dow Jones's total cash common dividend rose seventeen per cent from 1990 to 1995, not three hundred and seventy-three per cent; R. & D. expenditures increased about two hundred per cent instead of dropping eighteen per cent; and earnings reinvested in the business increased two hundred and thirty-three per cent rather than "plunging" a hundred and twenty-seven per cent.

ROGER B. MAY
Director, Corporate Relations
Dow Jones & Company
New York City

Ken Auletta replies:

The Bloomberg terminal did have a bad day, and the report I cited was misleading; Dow Jones's R. & D. expenditures and reinvested earnings did rise between 1990 and 1995. But these details do not negate my larger point: that Dow Jones is raising its dividends at the expense of investment in the company. That conclusion is supported by the fact that, according to the company's own filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission, forty-nine per cent of Dow Jones's earnings last year went into its dividend, leaving only fifty-one per cent to be reinvested in needy parts of the business, like Telerate, its faltering financial-information service.

Letters should be as brief as possible, and sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number to "The Mail," The New Yorker, 20 West 43rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. They may be edited for length and clarity.

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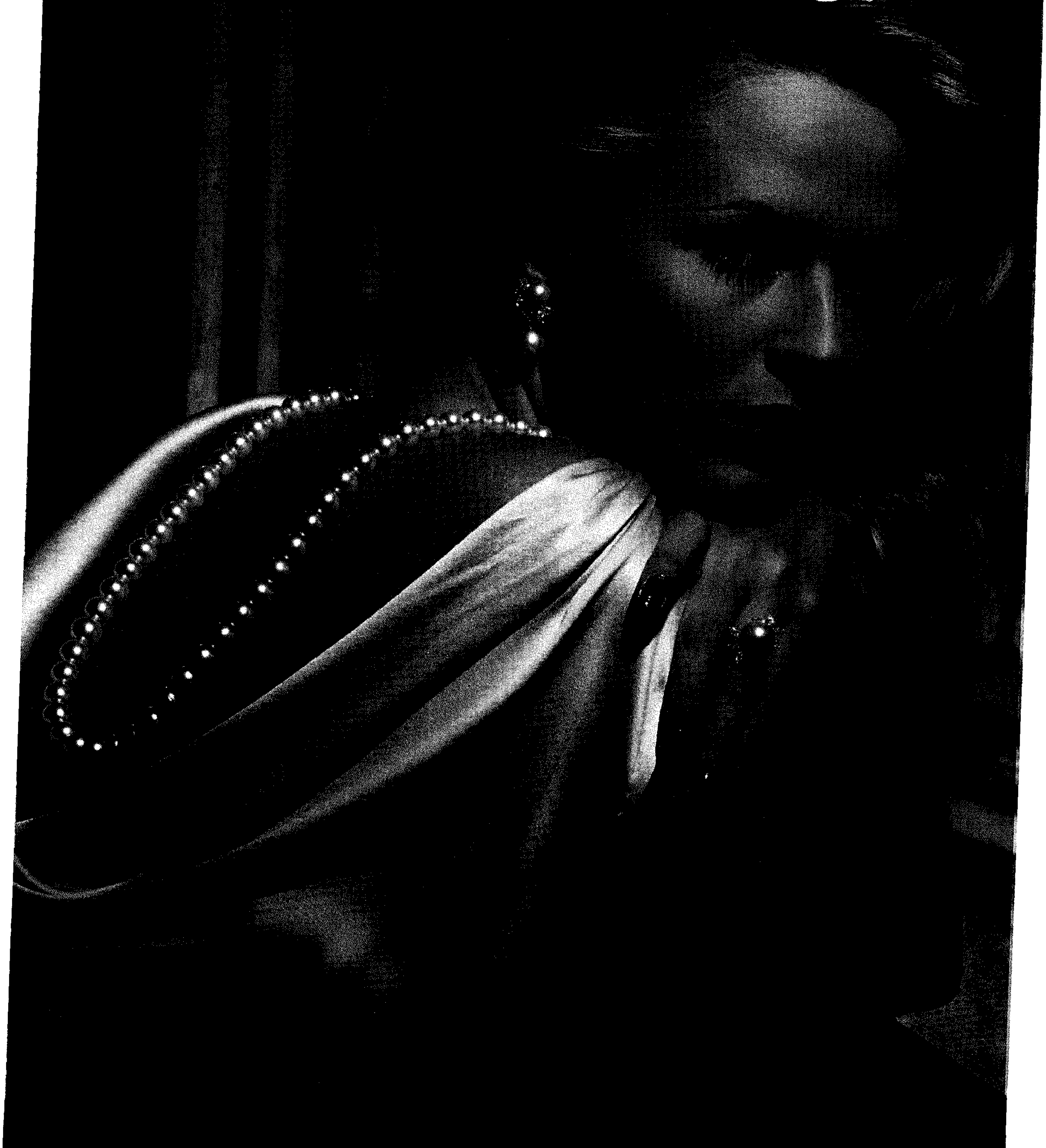

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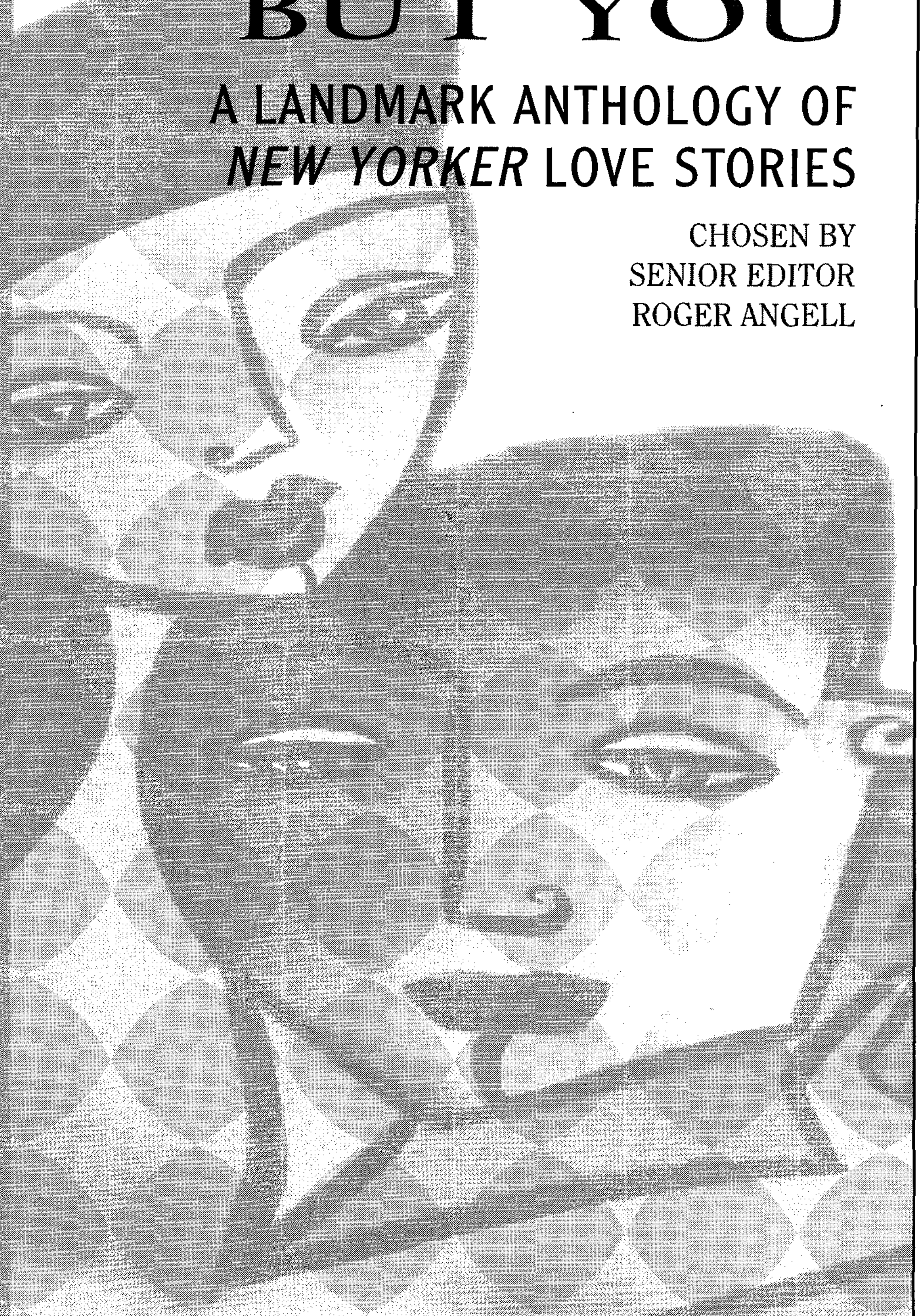

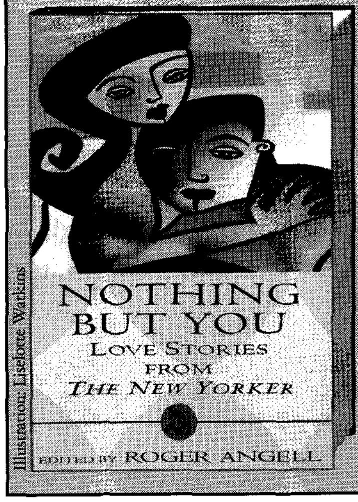

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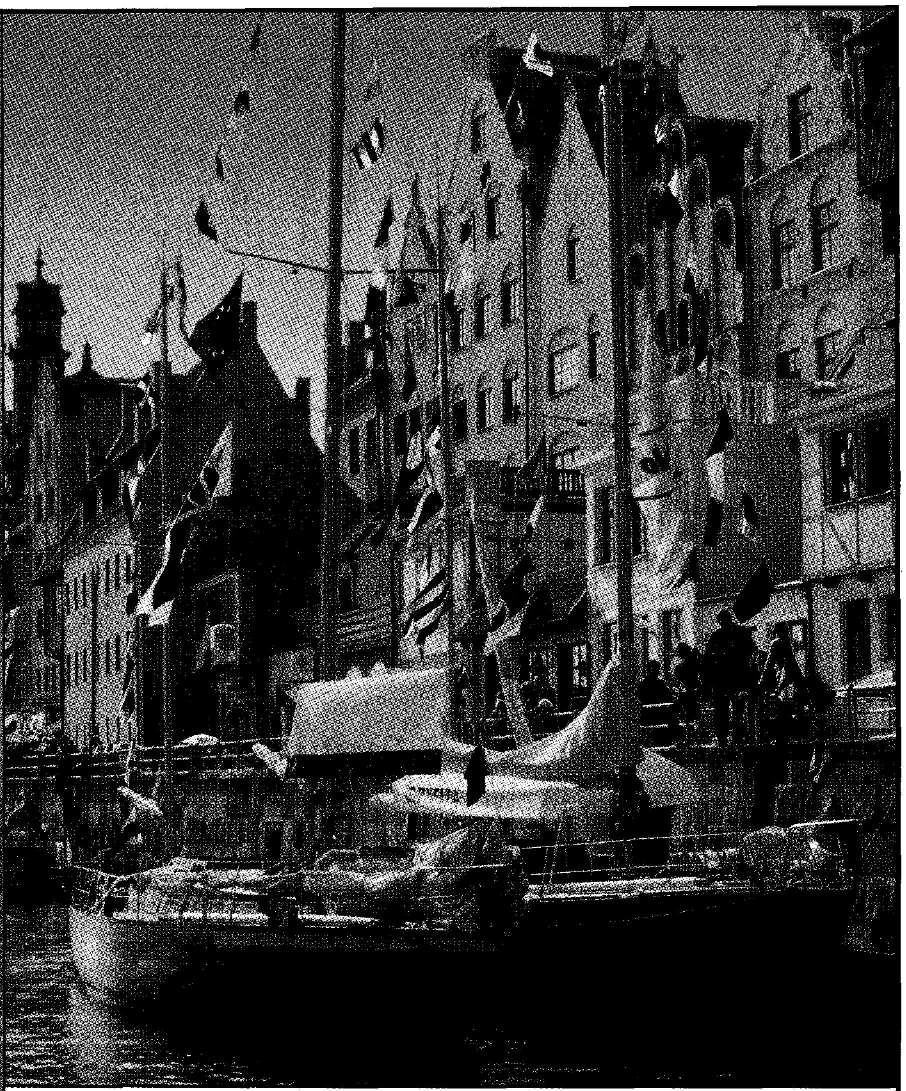

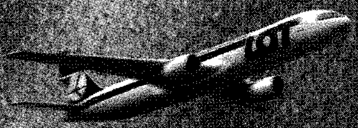

AN AUSSIE WALKS INTO A STORE IN POLAND, SAYS "G'DAY" TO THE SHOPKEEPER. SHE SAYS "NO, GDANSK."

"You must be here for our Millennium Celebration," she says in English, laughing at her little joke. "Gdansk's birthday party is the biggest one in Europe." "You've got quite the crowd," the Aussie smiles back. "Yes," the shopkeeper notes. "We have visitors here from all over the world." "I know," the Aussie says. "We had already planned to meet our cousins from Chicago here in Europe. And Poland was someplace that seemed a bit different. So when they suggested coming here for the Millennium, we got right on it. Quick flight for them too, since your LOT has the only nonstop flights from the States." "Yes," she smiles. "And the newest planes in the sky." The Aussie makes his purchase, and tips his hat to the shopkeeper with a quick "G'day." "No," she laughs, "Gdansk."

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THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

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All My Sons—The Roundabout Theatre Company presents Arthur Miller's 1947 drama. In previews through May 3. Opens May 4 at 2:30. (Laura Pels, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

Bermuda Avenue Triangle—A new comedy, about two retirement-community widows who fall under the spell of a mysterious man. In previews. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

Candide—Hal Prince's new staging of the 1956 adaptation of Voltaire's novel, with music by Leonard Bernstein, stars Jim Dale, Andrea Martin, and Harolyn Blackwell. In previews through April 28. Opens April 29 at 6:30. (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

Collected Stories—A drama by Donald Margulies, about the complex relationship between an aging writer (Maria Tucci) and her talented protégée (Debra Messing). Previews begin April 29. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Curse of the Starving Class—The Signature Theatre Company wraps up its Sam Shepard season with his 1978 drama. In previews through April 26. Opens April 27 at 3. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

The Disputation—A historical drama by Hyam Maccoby, adapted from his 1982 book, "Judaism on Trial," based on events that took place in Barcelona in 1263. In previews through the May 4 matinée. Opens that evening at 7. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000.)

The Gypsy and the Yellow Canary—Irene Worth stars in her own one-woman adaptation of Prosper Mérimée's novel "Carmen." In previews through May 3. Opens May 4 at 2 and continues through May 18. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

Jekyll & Hyde—Robin Phillips is the director of this musical based on Robert Louis Stevenson's tale of the two-faced physician. In previews through April 27. Opens April 28 at 6:45. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Life—A new musical by Cy Coleman (music) and Ira Gasman (lyrics), set in Times Square in 1980. Michael Blakemore is the director. In previews through April 25. Opens April 26 at 6:45. (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

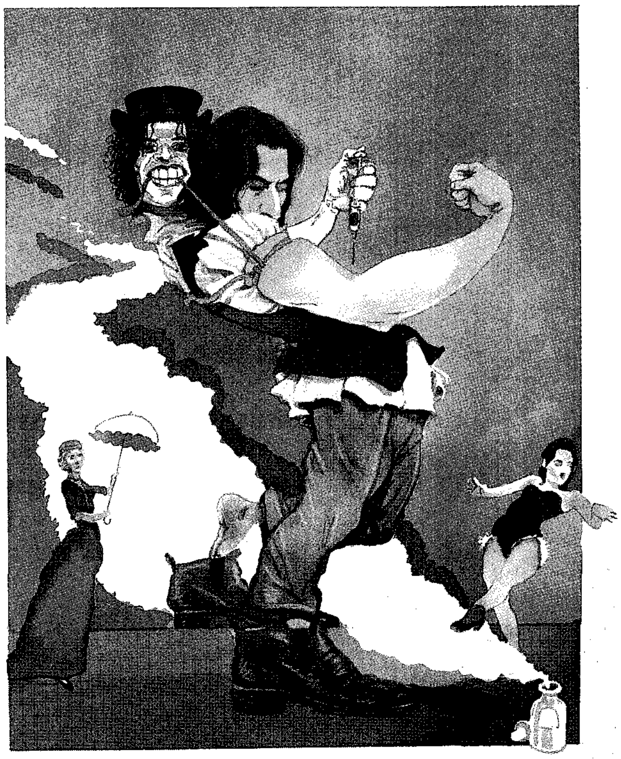
The Little Foxes—Lillian Hellman's 1939 drama about an unscrupulous Southern family of industrialists. In previews through April 26. Opens April 27 at 6:45. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

London Assurance—Brian Bedford has the lead in Dion Boucicault's 1841 comedy. In previews through April 29. Opens April 30 at 8. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

Mere Mortals and Others—Six one-act comedies by David Ives, including two new ones. In previews through April 27. Opens April 29 at 8. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052.)

Shanghai Lil's—Pan Asian Rep presents a musical by Lilah Kan (book) and Louis Stewart (music), set during the Second World War in a Chinatown night club in San Francisco. In previews through April 24. Opens April 25 at 8. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 245-2660.)

Steel Pier—John Kander wrote the music and Fred Ebb the lyrics for this romantic musical set in Atlantic City in 1933, during a dance marathon. Scott Ellis is the director. Two previews on April 23. Opens April 24 at 8. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)



Christiane Noll, Robert Cuccioli, and Linda Eder, in Leslie Bricusse and Frank Wildhorn's "Jekyll & Hyde."

WOJCIECH WOLYNSKI

Titanic—A new musical about the ill-fated ocean liner, directed by Richard Jones. Peter Stone wrote the book, Maury Yeston the music and lyrics. Opens April 23 at 6:30. (Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

Waiting for Lefty—Joanne Woodward directs Marisa Tomei in a Blue Light Theatre Company staging of Clifford Odets's 1935 proletarian drama about a taxi strike. In previews through April 26. Opens April 27 at 7 and runs through May 18. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 279-4200.)

Yiddle with a Fiddle—A musical comedy by Isaiah Sheffer (book and lyrics) and Abraham Ellstein (music), based on the 1936 Polish film "Yidl mitn Fidl." In previews. (American Jewish Theatre, 307 W. 26th St. 633-9797.)

The Young Girl and the Monsoon—Michael O'Keefe portrays a divorced father raising his twelve-year-old daughter, in a comedy-drama by James Ryan. In previews through April 26. Opens April 27 at 7. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

An American Daughter—At last, a winner for Lincoln Center Theatre. In the latest installment of Wendy Wasserstein's continuing examination of American womanhood, a doctor (Kate Nelligan) undergoing confirmation hearings for the post of Surgeon General gets run through the wringer by the media. It's a moving, compelling drama that resonates beyond the feminist arena, and it's very funny, but the jokes underline the tragic absurdity of a country increasingly governed by polls and spin doctors. The production is fine, the casting near-perfect, and the direction, by Daniel Sullivan, admirably sensitive. The set, the lighting, the sound, and the ushers are all terrific, too. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

Annie—Can the powerhouse waif find another bonanza in this twentieth-anniversary revival of her Broadway musical? With eight-year-old Brittny Kissinger wearing the red fright wig, anything is possible: no one ever went broke underestimating the intelligence of the New York public. Directed by Martin Charnin. (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Barrymore—Christopher Plummer's rich, unmiked voice hits every note of sarcasm and self-loathing in William Luce's rambunctious script (which is as good as one-man shows get), as he perfectly captures the grief behind the old ham's gallant frivolity. A big, juicy triumph, well directed by Gene Saks. (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Bunny Bunny—Playing no fewer than twenty-five bit parts, a new young actor named Alan Tudyk steals the show in this comedy by Alan Zweibel (one of the original "Saturday Night Live" writers) about his friendship with Gilda Radner, who died of cancer in 1989. Paula Cale and the excellent Bruno Kirby are likable as the leads, but Zweibel the author comes off, on occasion, as less than generous, giving Zweibel the character most of the best lines and making reference to Radner's bulimia over and over. Christopher Ashley directed. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

Chicago—Walter Bobbie's bookless, setless revival of the 1975 Kander-Ebb-Fosse extravaganza of cynicism (choreographed this time around by Ann Reinking) is about a woman

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the 20th Anniversary

"A glorious, glamorous, amorous musical. Thanks to Lesley Ann Warren, Margaret Whiting, John Pizzarelli, the great Wayne Cilento as director and choreographer, and of course, the lyrics of Johnny Mercer, this beautiful baby glitters!" –Sidney Zion, NY Daily News

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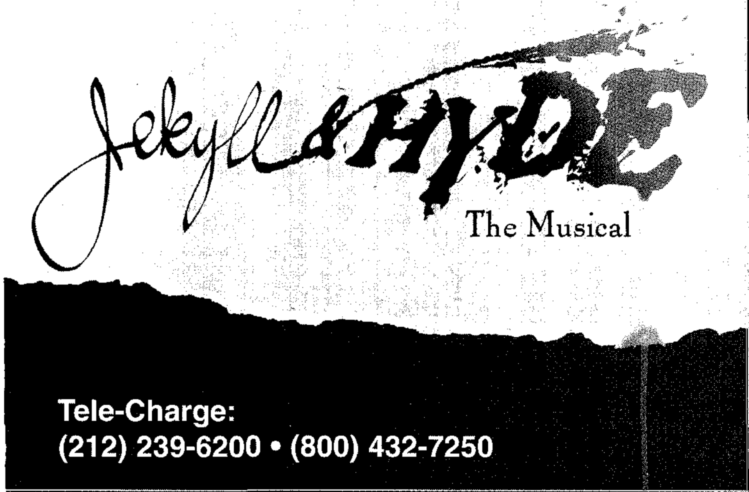
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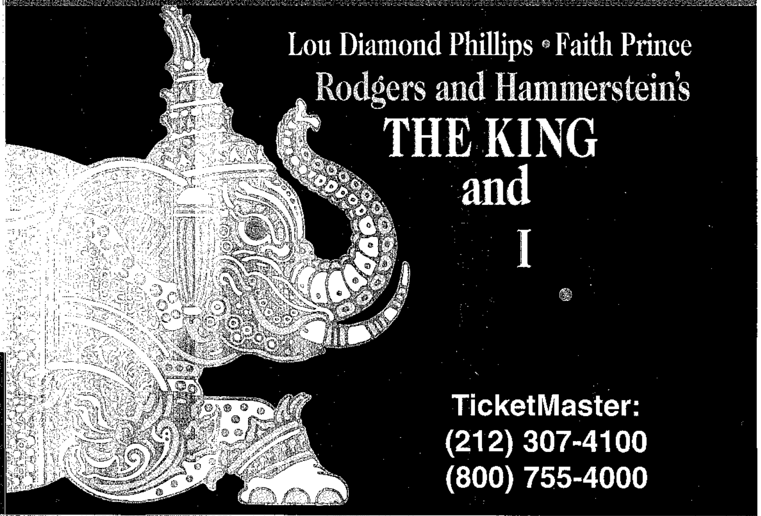
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TicketMaster: (212) 307-4100 • (800) 755-4000 who gets away with murder. This razzle-dazzle concert posing as a full-dress musical may do the same. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/25/96.) (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Corn—A Ridiculous Theatrical Company revival of Charles Ludlam's musical about the country-and-Western star Lola-Lola. (Chelsea Playhouse, 125 W. 22nd St. 307-4100.)

Dealer's Choice—Yes, it's poker as a metaphor for life, again. But Patrick Marber's new play is neither hokey nor clichéd: it's a funny, insightful exploration of the relationships between a restaurateur, his son, and his employees, who play a weekly poker game together and who are among the season's most convincing characters. Strongly played, and directed with an eye for emotional nuance by John Tillinger. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes April 27.)

Joseph Bologna, Renee Taylor, and Nanette Fabray, in "Bermuda Avenue Triangle."

ROBERT DE MICHIELL

A Doll's House—A version of Ibsen's play imported from the West End, which bears thrilling witness to what the playwright called the "revolution in the spirit of man." Anthony Page's scrupulous, sensitive direction catches all the music and irony in the collusion between Nora (masterfully played by Janet McTeer) and her husband, Torvald (the passionate Owen Teale). By making Torvald a full-blooded, decent, but blinkered executive and not a hectoring Victorian prig, he frees the drama from being a mere feminist tract and makes the tragedy of Torvald's unconsciousness all the more heartbreaking. (4/14/97) (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Dream—In this train wreck of a tribute to the great lyricist Johnny Mercer, Wayne Cilento's flailing choreography drowns Mercer's uniquely sly and clever words in a sea of arms and legs, and Lesley Ann Warren's vampy writhings make you avert your eyes. Two performers get out of the mess alive: Margaret Whiting, who unfussily sings a couple of gems, and the jazz guitarist John Pizzarelli, whose playing and singing both have an easy, loping, Mercer-like charm and clarity. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

The Gin Game—Charles Nelson Reilly directs Charles Durning and Julie Harris in D. L. Coburn's 1977 play. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

God's Heart—Even the engaging, intelligent performance by Ndehru Roberts, as a fifteen-year-old who's an avid reader and an aspiring crack dealer, can't make Craig Lucas's new play coherent. The action consists mostly of a series of dreams, eventually spiralling down into one in which a middle-class advertising executive (Amy Brenneman) tries to help the boy but ends up killing him. The plot also throws in a supercomputer, some lesbians, and another murder. Mr. Lucas seems to be trying to say something about notions of loss and identity in a postmodern world, but he hasn't succeeded. Directed by Joe Mantello. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

The Green Heart—What's this? A new musical that's neither half-baked nor too big for its britches? Charles Busch's book and Rusty Magee's music and lyrics are solid and charming, and some of the performances, under the direction of Kenneth Elliott, are priceless. As the conniving mistress of a man who's lost all his money, Alison Fraser is a cross between Ivana Trump and Zsa Zsa Gabor, and she's hilarious. Karen Trott (of "The Springhill Singing Disaster") is a rich nerd who lives for botany; she's the nutty center of the show, and she's perfect. David Andrew Macdonald plays the creep who eventually falls in love with her, but he's not quite creepy enough. Ruth Williamson is weird and wicked as a corrupt housekeeper. And James Noone's witty sets give the production a big boost. The show is a triumph of competence—and that's not a left-handed compliment. (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

The Hairy Ape—Times Square hasn't been given over *entirely* to the kind of good, clean fun extruded by the factories of Uncle Walt. The Wooster Group, under the direction of Elizabeth LeCompte, has been working on this production of Eugene O'Neill's 1922 Expressionist drama on and off for three years and has finally brought it uptown. Willem Dafoe, who plays a stoker on an ocean liner, gives an astonishing performance that's both finely tuned and boiling over with raw, wild rage. Every element of the production contributes to its power: the dangerous-looking, mazelike metal set, the loud, inhuman sounds emanating from the ship's bowels, the Hades-like lighting, the discomforting music of John Lurie. (Selwyn, 229 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

Hate Mail—Bill Corbett and Kira Obolensky's new play traces the unfolding of an epistolary love-hate relationship. (Primary Stages, 354 W. 45th St. 333-4052. Closes May 11.)

A Huey P. Newton Story—Roger Guenveur Smith gives an outstanding performance in a one-man show that he assembled from interviews with and writings by the co-founder of the Black Panther Party. A mesmerizing (and demystifying) hour and forty-five minutes. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200. Closes April 27.)

The Invisible Man and **The Nightingale and Not the Lark**—Two one-acts by the Irish novelist and playwright Jennifer Johnston, starring WB Brydon and Paddy Croft, respectively. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737. Closes May 11.)

The Joy of Going Somewhere Definite—Three aimless, unemployed loggers get saddled with a mystery drunk, discover that his wife seems to have left him, and set out to get her back. Nothing turns out quite as planned in Quincy Long's play. It's hilarious, but the depiction of men desperate for any goal at all is, in the end, quietly moving; at the same time, Guy Boyd, J. R. Horne, and Jordan Lage are so strong and so funny that the men they play don't seem to need our sympathy. They tend to burst into songs set to cheery tunes ("We're men without women, loggers without trees"), and there are other bizarre events, too, but the director, William H. Macy, blends it all into a charming and utterly believable production. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200.)

The Last Night of Ballyhoo—In his new play, a romantic comedy of manners set in Atlanta (where he grew up) in 1939, Alfred Uhry stays true to a Southern sense of propriety: he takes on an unsavory topic (anti-Semitism among the Jewish upper crust) without dwelling on it long enough to offend anyone, and, like a practiced host, he shows you a good time without taxing you. Ron Lagomarsino directed. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 307-4100.)

The Last Sweet Days—Gretchen Cryer (book and lyrics) and Nancy Ford (music) have fused two of their earlier musicals in a new work, about two people who begin a romance years after being trapped together in an elevator. (Theatre at St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. 935-5820. Closes May 4.)

Men on the Verge of a His-Panic Breakdown—The Chilean-born playwright Guillermo Reyes's one-man show stars Felix A. Pire as a variety of gay Hispanic immigrants. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 265-1086.)

Once Upon a Mattress—That modern madcap Sarah Jessica Parker shines as the princess in Gerald Gutierrez's revival of Mary Rodgers's silly, marshmallowy 1959 musical, but she deserves a vehicle that, to paraphrase Jerome Kern, is not merely lovely to look at but delightful to know. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Play On!—Twenty-three Duke Ellington songs strung out on a thread of plot from "Twelfth Night." The music is wonderful, of course, but the musical is not—it's a mutant production in which character is fiddled with to legitimize songs that were never written to illuminate character. Neither the show's book, by Cheryl L. West, nor its star, Cheryl Freeman, has much fun with the confusion of genders. Other talented performers generate a great deal of heat, but no warmth. (4/7/97) (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

The Plough and the Stars—Sean O'Casey's take on the Easter Uprising of 1916, as seen from one Dublin tenement. The director, Charlotte Moore, creates some moving moments—as when the Irish Citizen Army goes off to battle and a publican (the wonderfully understated Con Horgan) marches in his bar in silent accord—and she paces O'Casey's humor well. Louise Favier's obtuse, hysterical performance as a young wife abandoned for the cause is outweighed by Pauline Flanagan's vigor as a British sympathizer and Des Keogh's calm decency as the only man with the courage to talk back to the British soldiers. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737. Closes May 11.)

Secrets of the Celtic Heart—In his one-man show, Brian Mallon resurrects Welsh and Irish poets from the Druids to Dylan Thomas. (Irish Arts Center, 553 W. 51st St. 757-3318.)

Stanley—Circle in the Square springs back to life with this triumphant mounting of the Royal National Theatre production of Pam Gems's play about the British artist Stanley Spencer (1891-1959). John Caird is the director. (3/10/97) (50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200. Closes April 27.)

Stonewall Jackson's House—Jonathan Reynolds's comedy, about a woman who pushes the racial envelope, hits all its targets—from multiculturalism to the misuses of history—with deadly aim, and the versatile cast is hilarious. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

Sympathetic Magic—From Lanford Wilson, a new drama about a couple caught on the horns of a dilemma. Directed by Marshall W. Mason. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200.)

Tap Dogs—Australia's work-booted tap troupe brings its North American tour to New York. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

Wine-Blue-Open-Water—A modern staging of Homer's Odyssey, by the Gale Gates et al. company. (67 Broad St., fifteenth floor. 269-7858.)

The Young Man from Atlanta—Horton Foote's Pulitzer Prize-winning drama, set in Houston in 1950, is a house of cards propped up on the foundation of powerful performances by Rip Torn and Shirley Knight, as a couple whose only child killed himself six months earlier. What Foote catches in the play's slow, clumsy exposition is the maneuvers of denial which sustain optimism. The wife won't face the issue of suicide; the husband won't face the issue of homosexuality. The audience gets the point within the first ten minutes and then spends the next two hours

I already have a stove.
Who needs a microwave?

Why get an answering machine?
They'll call me back.

My vinyl sounds good.
Why buy a CD player?

My old camera works fine.
Why get an Advanced Photo System camera?

waiting for the light to come on in the couple's befogged minds. Robert Falls is the director. (4/14/97) (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

LONG RUNS

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **BRING IN DA NOISE, BRING IN DA FUNK:** Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FORBIDDEN BROADWAY STRIKES BACK!:** Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599. . . . **FULL GALLOP:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM:** St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **GRANDMA SYLVIA'S FUNERAL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 691-1555. . . . **HOWARD CRABTREE'S WHEN PIGS FLY:** Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. . . . **I LOVE YOU, YOU'RE PERFECT, NOW CHANGE:** Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 239-6200. . . . **JOSEPH GABRIEL: MAGIC ON BROADWAY:** Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE KING AND I:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100. . . . **LATE NITE CATECHISM:** St. Luke's Church, 308 W. 46th St. 239-6200. . . . **MASTER CLASS:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **RENT:** Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 921-8000. . . . **ROB BECKER'S DEFENDING THE CAVEMAN:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 307-4100. . . . **SMOKEY JOE'S CAFÉ:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200. . . . **VICTOR/VICTORIA:** Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET—The spring season opens with a fortnight of "The Sleeping Beauty," Peter Martins' updating of the Petipa classic. (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. May 1-2 and May 6 at 8, May 3 at 2 and 8, and May 4 at 3 and 8. The season continues through June 29.)

BALLET GULBENKIAN—In its American début, the Lisbon-based company presents three works: "Thirteen Gestures of a Body," by Olga Roriz, to a score by António Emiliano; "E i Sospiri e le Lacrime e'l Desio," by Vasco Wellenkamp, to four Liszt piano pieces; and "Through Nana's Eyes," by Itzik Galili, to Tom Waits. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. April 22-25 at 8, April 26 at 2 and 8, and April 27 at 2.)

SHOBANA JEYASINGH DANCE COMPANY—Jeyasingh trained in her native Madras in a form of Bharata Natyam dance which stressed percussive bare feet and complicated, abstract hand gestures. In "Palimpsest" and "Romance . . . with Footnotes," the choreographer and her London-based troupe blend such movements with similar strains of modern dance. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. April 29-May 2 at 8, May 3 at 2 and 8, and May 4 at 2.)

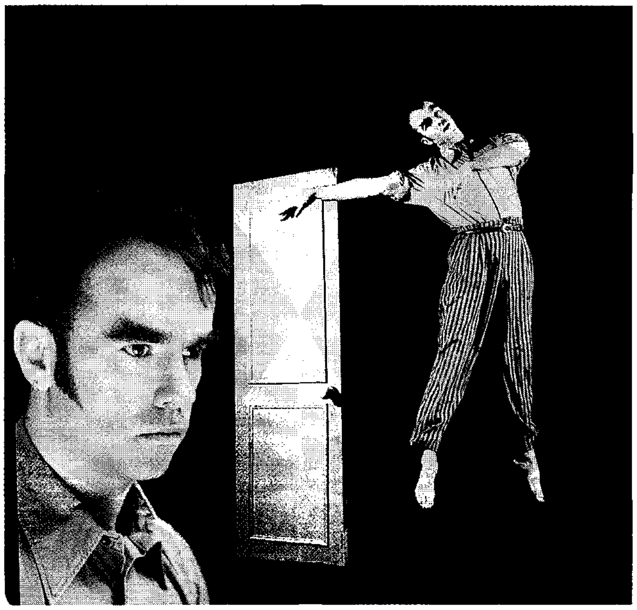
"WHERE I END AND WE BEGIN"—When asked about his flashes of showmanship, the former Bill T. Jones dancer and "Stomp" trouper Seán Curran confesses to a vaudevillean urge—to dazzle, to entertain, and "to be like a magician: to mystify." He's agile enough to do all three in the same movement; his speedy, virtuosic passages can summon several conflicting emotions (irony, anger, nostalgia) at once. At times, he works against these strengths: he is setting the title piece, a group work he originally made on the Skånes Dance Theatre of Malmö (ballet dancers "who are used to being princes and princesses"), on twenty downtown dancers whose skills lie more in the direction of grittiness and honesty. At other times, he can make his virtuosity whisper, as in "Am I Dead Yet?," a solo about friends he visited in the hospital which he performs while lying on the floor. One inspiration, he says, was something that a dying friend, Demian Acquavella, was doing in his bed: "I think maybe he thought he was dancing, but I'll never know." (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. April 24-27 at 8:30.)

"WAVING TO YOU FROM HERE"—Choreographer John Jasperse collaborates with composer James Lo on a full-length program that uses various strategies—false ceilings, shrinking costumes, stairs to nowhere, choreography presented in progressively shorter segments—to suggest longing and loss. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. April 24-26 at 8 and April 27 at 3.)

BALLET BUILDERS—Seven works by as many choreographers, including "Lost," by Chris DC Ramos, and "Nostalgia," a solo for Rasta Thomas by Vladimir Anguelov. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 355-6160. April 26 at 8 and April 27 at 3.)

KIM ROBARDS DANCE—The ten members of the Denver-based troupe present two works by Robards, "Musings: Dusk to Dawn" and "Unveiled." (Merce Cunningham Studio, 55 Bethune St. 924-0077. April 25-26 at 9.)

"THESE WOMEN"—Former Bill T. Jones dancer Amy Pivar and therapist Freda Rosen collaborate on a collage of solo and group works about women, from a version of "Swan Lake" with a full company of princesses to an office-bound tango. (Rose Building, Lincoln Center. 924-0077. April 24 at 7:30, April 25-26 at 8, and April 27 at 2.)



Seán Curran, in "Where I End and We Begin."

JOSEF ASTOR

DANCE AT HOLY TRINITY—Two showcases of recent work; the choreographers include Homer Avila and Edisa Weeks, Maia Claire Garrison, Randy James, and Lynn Parkerson. (Church of the Holy Trinity, 316 E. 88th St. For information, call 876-4961. April 24-26 and May 1-3 at 8, and April 27 and May 4 at 3.)

"ANTONIO CAIDO"—Choreographers Rosane Chamecki and Andrea Lerner have collaborated with Luscious Jackson keyboardist Vivian Trimble to create a work about sudden loss (the title character falls down a hole in a boardwalk) which keeps proposing other, less unfortunate outcomes. The dancers also deal in various ways with a three-foot see-through center-stage open cube of water. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. May 1-4 at 8:30.)

"DRUMMIN' "—Composer Tania León, videographer Philip Mallory Jones, and choreographer Bebe Miller join forces on a work in progress about the rhythms of life in various Miami neighborhoods. (Thread Waxing Space, 476 Broadway. 966-9774. April 26 at 8 and April 27 at 2.)

MICHAEL MAO DANCE—The fourteen-member company performs repertory works and two premières, "Sigh No More, Ladies" and "Poème Lyrique." (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. May 1-3 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE

CONCERTS

NEVILLE BROTHERS—The great American party band. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. April 23 at 8.)

"JAZZ GOES BROADWAY"—Show tunes interpreted by vocalists Melba Joyce, Grady Tate, and Etta Jones and instrumentalists Al Grey, Barry Harris, Rufus Reid, Ben Riley, Houston Person, and Mark Morganelli. (Town Hall. April 24 at 8.)

HAROLD BUDD AND JON GIBSON—The pianist, who has recorded atmospheric work with Brian Eno and the Cocteau Twins, and the soprano saxophonist. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. April 24 at 8.)

WIDESPREAD PANIC—Boilerplate rockers from Athens, Georgia. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. April 24 at 8.)

ANDREW HILL—The pianist and composer. (Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. 708-9491. April 25 at 5:30.)

GRAND FUNK RAILROAD—The seventies legends lead a benefit for the Bosnian Relief Fund, with guests Peter Frampton, Leslie West (of Mountain), members of the Black Crowes, and a forty-piece orchestra, led by Paul Shaffer, which includes members of the Sarajevo Symphony Orchestra. (Beacon Theatre. April 25 at 8.)

BOBBY MCFERRIN—The gracefully acrobatic vocalist and composer. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. April 25 at 8.)

"WCBS-FM 25TH ANNIVERSARY CONCERT"—With such New York-bred all-stars as Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons, Dion, Little Anthony and the Imperials, Ronnie Spector, and Felix Cavaliere's Rascals. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. April 25-26 at 8 and April 27 at 3.)

"AN EVENING WITH HARRY"—At which Mr. Belafonte performs, receives the Aaron Davis Hall Harlem Renaissance Award, and is fêted by the likes of Diahann Carroll, Geri Allen, Roy Hargrove, Miriam Makeba, Letta Mbulu, Joshua Redman, Max Roach, Lenny White, and Buster Williams. (Aaron Davis Hall, City College, Convent Ave. at 134th St. 650-7100. April 28 at 7:30.)

RAINFOREST FOUNDATION BENEFIT—With Stevie Wonder, Lyle Lovett, Bonnie Raitt, Sting, James Taylor, Bobby McFerrin, and others. (Carnegie Hall. April 30 at 8.)

"MY FAVORITE THINGS: A TRIBUTE TO RICHARD RODGERS"—Composer Richard Rodgers, in tandem with lyricists Lorenz Hart and, later, Oscar Hammerstein II, provided enough classic songs to keep jazzmen recasting their felicities well into the next century. The Carnegie Hall Jazz Band will be joined by saxophone dynamo George Coleman and his seasoned group and the rising pianist and vocalist Diana Krall. (Carnegie Hall. May 1 at 8.)

TRIBUTE TO JIMI HENDRIX—The Black Rock Coalition pays homage to the touchstone of modern rock with performances by Don Byron, Lenny White, Joseph Bowie, Jean Paul Bourelly, Michael Hill, Gene Williams, and Nona Hendryx. (Town Hall. May 2 at 8.)

GUIDED BY VOICES—In the past year or so, this Dayton-based combo has gone from cult-confection status to near-stardom. Its latest offering, "Mag Earwhig!," may take the band to the arena status that has long eluded it. (Westbeth Theatre Center, 151 Bank St. 741-0391. May 2 at 9.)

EASTMAN JAZZ ENSEMBLE—Joined by composer and trombonist Bob Brookmeyer. (Town Hall. May 3 at 8.)

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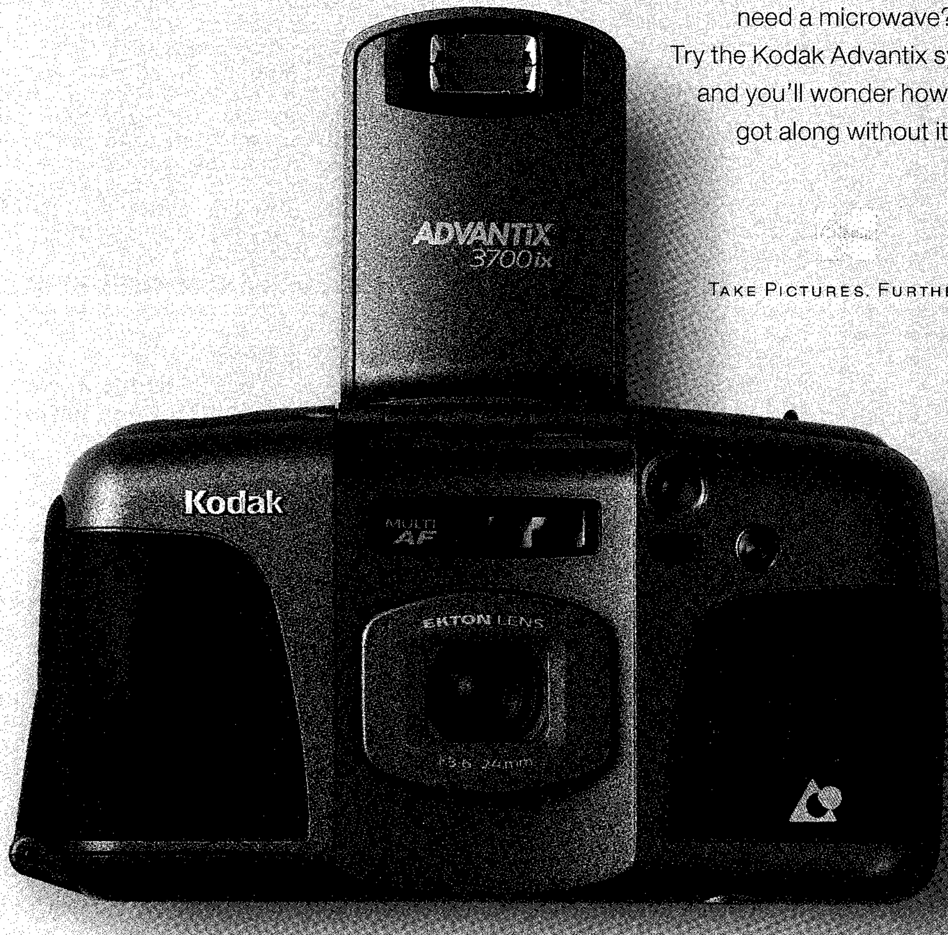

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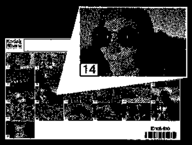

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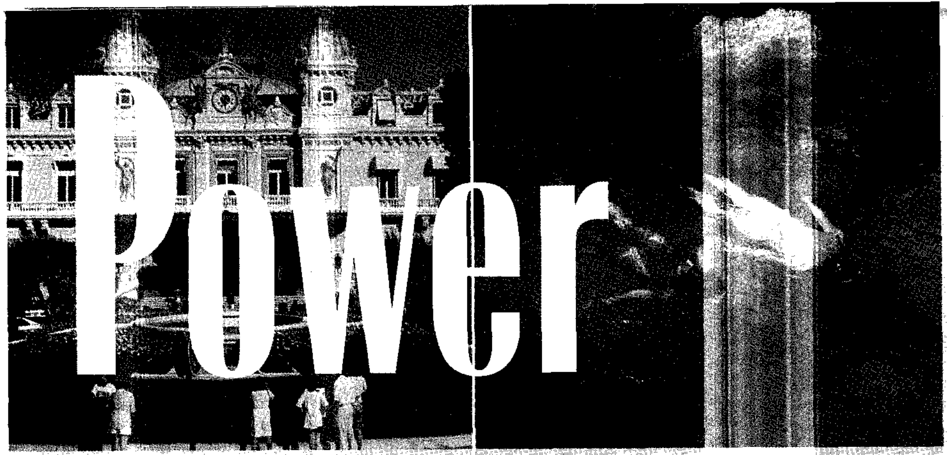

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JAZZ AND STANDARDS

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is always advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—**WESLIA WHITFIELD**, in residence in the Oak Room through May 3, renders song classics with such imagination that her interpretations can't be confused with anyone else's. Her technique is distinctive, too: she spins out the longest phrases in the business, sometimes saving intense surges for the very end, where others would be completely out of breath. Since a deadpan innocence reigns over her style, even modest shadings of color or mood pack a wallop. Her catch-all show is not a standard cabaret act, ranging as it does from torch song to real jazz; by the time she reaches her charming but macabre conclusion (Arlen's "Ding! Dong! The Witch Is Dead!"), you're no longer expecting anything you're likely to hear elsewhere. Dining.

Birdland, 315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—The **JOHN HICKS** quintet, with **BOBBY WATSON**, is in through April 26. If pianist Hicks played alto saxophone, he'd probably sound just like Watson, and vice versa. Both are verbose and intense, and together they ignite a bandstand with hard-bop fervor. April 28: The **TOSHIKO AKIYOSHI JAZZ ORCHESTRA**. April 29-30: The **WESS ANDERSON** quintet. Saxophonist Anderson is a Southern player—that is, his tone spreads out like butter over grits. Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Through April 27: **JOÃO BOSCO** and the **LEO GANDELMAN** group. April 29-May 4: You can practically feel the collective shiver running down the backs of New York bop saxophonists when the master, **JOHNNY GRIFFIN**, makes his annual visit from overseas. His rock-'em-sock-'em quartet is paired with Latin percussion giant **RAY BARRETTO** and his band, **NEW WORLD SPIRIT**. Starting May 6: The **TOOTS THIELMANS** quartet and the **ELIANE ELIAS** trio. Dining.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The hotly anticipated revival of Bernstein's "Candide" brings to mind **BARBARA COOK**, who created the role of Cunégonde in 1956, after making her mark in two Broadway musicals with lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II, "Oklahoma!" and "Carousel." Four decades later, she's saluting Hammerstein in her show at this warmly enveloping nightspot (through May 3). Though her sunny soprano no longer reaches as high as an elephant's eye, it remains a commanding instrument, and she still sets the standard in combining musicality with intensity. You could pick up her recent DRG recording of the repertoire, but she's far more affecting in person, investing Hammerstein's familiar lyrics with new interest, sprinkling in a couple of lesser-known items (including a film-noir reading of "The Gentleman Is a Dope"), and benefitting everywhere from the support of her longtime pianist, **WALLY HARPER** (whose hushed arrangement of "All the Things You Are" explores the simple, enduring wonder of the major scale). . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, pianist **PETER MINTUN** is in charge through May 3.

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through April 27: The **MICHEL CAMILO** trio. April 29-May 4: Pianist **CYRUS CHESTNUT** is equal parts Art Tatum and Count Basie—a maniacal two-handed speed demon who can turn around and deliver the goods with a single note. From May 6: The **CHARLIE HADEN AND PAUL BLEY** duo. Mondays *belong to national treasure* **LES PAUL**. *Dining.*

Knickerbocker, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—Through April 26: **VALERIE CAPERS** (piano) and **JOHN ROBINSON** (bass). April 30-May 3: Pianist **JUDY CARMICHAEL** strides like Fats Waller's long-lost daughter, and, in saxophonist **MIKE HASHIM**, she's got a partner hooked into her pre-swing groove.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—The great cabaret in the sky. Statuesque chanteuse **KAREN AKERS** casts her spell through May 10.

DONNA
SAGONA

Zucchero, at the Beacon Theatre.

MARINA SAGONA

Smalls, 183 W. 10th St. (929-7565)—April 24: The **DWAYNE BURNO** quintet, featuring **PETER BERNSTEIN** (see below). April 30: The **PETER BERNSTEIN** quartet. Guitarist Bernstein has scored a dream gig in Joshua Redman's band. On these rare nights off, he gets to show off his sound—it's like Grant Green hot-wired for the nineties—and his genuine feel for the blues. May 1: The **MYRON WALDEN** trio.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—Through April 27: The **CHICO FREEMAN** quintet. Freeman, a versatile instrumentalist who concentrates on tenor sax, is making a very graceful transition from youthful avant-gardist to middle-aged classicist. With his complete command of his horn, he can now move in any direction he pleases—the ultimate freedom. April 29-May 4: The **YOSUKE YAMASHITA** trio. From May 6: The **DAVID (FATHEAD) NEWMAN** quintet. Dining.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through April 27: Alto saxophonist **CHARLES MC PHERSON** has called the West Coast home for decades now, but he hasn't gone cool on us yet. With a steaming rhythm section behind him, he can still conjure up the intensity of his classic early-sixties albums for Prestige. April 29-May 4: The **BARRY HARRIS** trio. Whereas most bop pianists approach their keyboard like Secretariat on a good day, Harris is a classicist and a seducer, easing into his runs with a temperate touch and always placing melody before virtuosity. Starting May 6: The **RON CARTER** quintet. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

Visiones, 125 Macdougal St., at W. 3rd St. (673-5576)—Through April 26: **JONNY KING** plays smart jazz piano, drawing on a host of superior models as he firms up his own increasingly authoritative voice. His solid quartet includes the ever-dependable altoist **STEVE WILSON** and the drum-legend-in-the-making **BILLY DRUMMOND**. May 6: The **ATTILA ZOLLER** trio. Even after more than a quarter century of refined improvising, guitarist Zoller hasn't *yet gone beyond musician's-musician status.* Still, his well of inspiration gets replenished yearly, as his radiant trio work with Lee Konitz and Don Friedman has recently proved.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—Through April 26: When you reach the level of professionalism, consistency, and inspiration that pianist **JUNIOR MANCE**, saxophonist **JOE TEMPERLEY**, and bassist **CALVIN HILL** can boast, honorary jazz stardom should be yours. April 28-May 3: **BOB KINDRED** (saxophone), **LEE MUSIKER** (piano), and **DEAN JOHNSON** (bass). Dining.

ROCK, ETC.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—April 25-27: An evening with guitarist **ROBBEN FORD**. May 1: **JOHN MAYALL AND THE BLUESBREAKERS**. Mayall is best known (somewhat unfairly) as the man who introduced Eric Clapton to the world. The Bluesbreakers anticipated many British bands (the Yardbirds, Cream, the Faces, and innumerable others) in mixing Delta blues with loud electric guitars. A gig with the Bluesbreakers was a launching pad for young talent: in addition to Clapton, Mick Taylor, Peter Green, John McVie, and Mick Fleetwood all apprenticed with Mayall. Since the sixties, he's released more than a dozen records. They've been uneven, but this rare performance will be something of a master class. May 3: Country-folk great **GUY CLARK**.

CBGB & OMFUG, *315* Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—A graffiti-strewn cave packed every evening with new and used bands. April 25: **SPACEHOG**. Powered by the zircon-throated Royston Langdon and his guitar-playing brother, Anthony, this glam outfit from the Lower East Side via Leeds has a classic blokes-from-down-the-road charisma and a handful of anthems that would make Spinal Tap proud.

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—April 23: Up-and-coming Brit-pop stars the **SNEAKER PIMPS**, whose "Underground" is one of this year's catchiest singles. April 24-25: Reborn from the ashes of Uncle Tupelo (the same ones that gave us Wilco), **SON VOLT** features raggedy guitars, stark acoustic plucking, and cut-to-the-bone tales that made the band's début album, "Trace," a dark, down-and-out vision. Its new release is called "Straightaways." With urban folkie **RICHARD BUCKNER** on the 24th and former Replacements replacement guitarist **SLIM DUNLAP** on the 25th. April 28: From Chapel Hill, the headquarters of indie rock, the fab sounds of **BEN FOLDS FIVE**, a smart piano-based trio led by Ben Folds, who plays a jaunty baby grand and sings like a cross between Joe Jackson and Freddie Mercury. With the delightfully kitschy **KOMEDA**. May 2: Roots-rock out of Minneapolis from the **JAYHAWKS**, who haven't been around in a while. May 3: The Japanese punk-pop of **SHONEN KNIFE**.

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—April 26: Left-of-center mirth from the **KLEZMATICS**, a band that has the musicianship to back up its attitude, which is half downtown, half shtetl. April 27: **THE EXTENDED PIANO: A DISKLAVIER FESTIVAL**, curated by Elliott Sharp, includes performances by **MUHAL RICHARD ABRAMS**, **ZEENA PARKINS**, **FRED FRITH**, and **RHYS CHATHAM**. April 29: Virtual-reality boy **JARON LANIER** and **JAMES NYORAKU SCHLEFER**, master of the *shakuhachi,* a traditional Japanese flute.

Manny's Car Wash, 1558 Third Ave., at 87th St. (369-2583)—April 24: **MARIA** ("Midnight at the Oasis") **MULDAUR**. April 25: The sweet wail of R. & B. singer **FRANKIE LEE**.

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-4064)—April 23: **RONNIE SPECTOR** makes a rare club appearance. (See also "WCBS-FM," in Concerts.) April 24: The **SNEAKER PIMPS** (see

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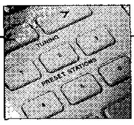

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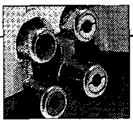

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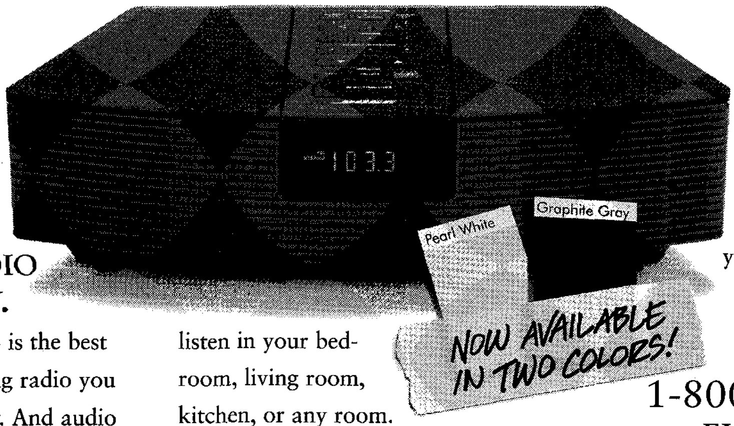

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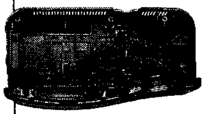

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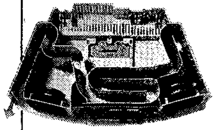

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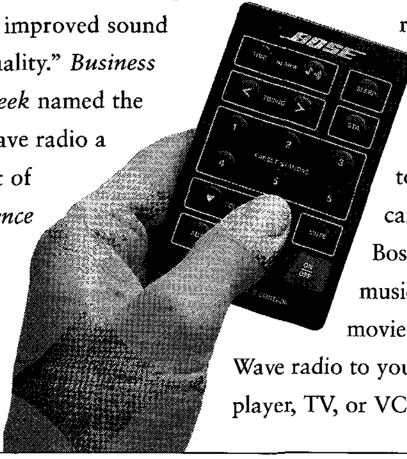

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TASTE OF NEW YORK:

The VISA® Preferred Guide to Dining

By Susan Breslow Sardone

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ALISON ON DOMINICK STREET • 38 Dominick Street • 212-727-1188 Located in a still ungentrified part of TriBeCa, Alison on Dominick Street welcomes diners into an elegantly simple blue-and-white room whose candles cast a soft, romantic glow. Chef Daniel Silverman serves food "influenced by the seasonal produce of the southwest of France and the Mediterranean, which brings freshness and depth of taste to a country-French-style menu." Complex and skillfully prepared dishes include a house-cured salmon appetizer infused with Pastis and served with a shaved fennel and radish salad with fried capers. His imaginative and generously portioned entrées include a Maine lobster stew, sautéed Arctic char (similar to salmon), and roasted free-range chicken.

Campagna is both rustic and plush, a perfect backdrop for the flavorful and earthy food of Italy's many regions.

CAMPAGNA • 24 East 21st Street • 212-460-0900 Like a stylish Italian country home (which just happens to be in The Flatiron District), Campagna combines rustic details with casual chic: antique sideboards, farmhouse chairs, sisal flooring, and contemporary artwork. Here chef/owner Mark Strausman creates dishes that are "peasant in the true sense of the word...hearty, gutsy, robust." Start with gnocchi alla romana or grilled octopus and calamari. Entrées include roasted halibut alla siciliana, lobster and assorted shellfish in a spicy sauce, and a daily choice of pasta and risotto. Specials reflect the changing bounty of the seasons. Sunday evenings the restaurant features family-style meals of classic Southern Italian specialties.

Sensual and leisurely, Le Colonial presents an authentic Vietnamese menu with the subtle flair and flavor of French cuisine.

LE COLONIAL • 149 East 57th Street • 212-752-0808 Evoking a bygone time and place, Le Colonial presents the food and mood of the twenties to the thirties French Indochina. The artfully languid look of this two-story restaurant comes from cool tile floors, period photographs, ceiling fans, and leather banquettes. Chef Viet Tran's authentic Vietnamese menu focuses on light and vividly flavored specialties with almost no fat. Specialties include *chao tom*, grilled shrimp with angel-hair noodles, mint, and peanut sauce; *goi bo*, spicy beef salad with lemongrass

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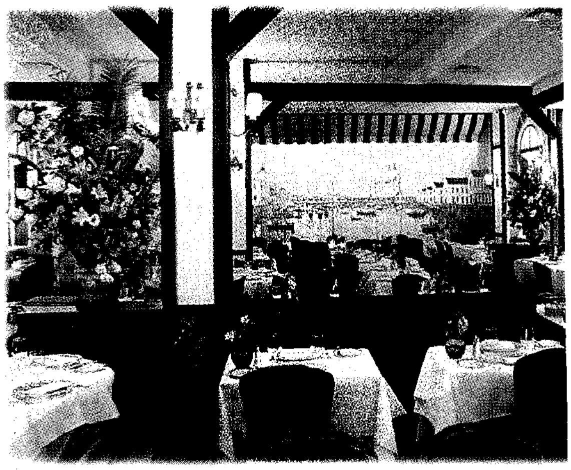
and basil; and *vit quay*, ginger-marinated roast duck with tamarind sauce. In the upstairs lounge, time stands still as guests recline on rattan couches, and jazz plays softly.

LA CÔTE BASQUE • 60 West 55th Street • 212-688-6525 For more than forty-five years, La Côte Basque has been known as one of New York's most charming and beautiful restaurants. Its sumptuous setting—which features murals of the Basque coast and countryside—frequently plays host to royalty, film stars, and ladies who lunch. All savor chef/owner Jean Jacques Rachou's French cuisine, which, over the years has evolved to include dishes that use fresh herbs and lighter sauces. "Those who are attached to more traditional dishes will find them as a special," Rachou reassures. Signature entrées include roasted duckling with honey, and a Grand Marnier and black cherry sauce; and black bass fillet in a potato crust with red wine sauce.



In a new location since 1995, La Côte Basque transported its sunny murals, 40,000-bottle wine cellar, and old magic to West 55th Street.

INAGIKU • 111 East 49th Street • 212-355-0440 A new-style Japanese restaurant in the Waldorf=Astoria Hotel, Inagiku is more casual than traditionally ceremonial restaurants, with a stylish openness and theatricality. Its Shabu Shabu bar menu features Japanese finger food, and classic private *tatami* rooms are also available. In addition to offering sushi, sashimi, and tempura, chef Haruo Ohbu has invented dishes such as *kaisen yose* (green-tea-accented crabs, shrimp, and scallops in a sesame dressing) and *eel hakata* (napoleons of barbecued eel layered with spinach and shiitake mushrooms). The multicourse *omakase* tasting menu is complemented with Champagne, sake, and other wines.

LAYLA • 211 West Broadway • 212-431-0700 Fit for the sultans of SoHo, Layla provides a playful, eccentric interpretation of Middle Eastern dining. Undulating walls—curvaceous as the belly dancer who appears around 9 P.M.—are lined with shards of broken pottery. Munch from the basket of crisp *lavosh* triangles while deciding which entrée to select. Chef Joseph Fortunato—influenced by Moroccan, Turkish, Lebanese, and Mediterranean cooking—delivers an innovative and flavorful cuisine. A crab-filled phyllo dish makes a great beginning, and grilled salmon wrapped in grape leaves is a superb entrée. Whimsical wine-list headings include "King Tut's Top Reds" and "Which Wine Will Impress Your Boss?" Like the food, these selections are seriously good.

IL NIDO • 251 East 53rd Street • 212-753-8450 One of the first of New York's authentic Northern Italian restaurants, Il Nido is a longtime favorite of Manhattan's power elite. Despite its rustic accents, the emphasis here is on comfort, with thick carpeting, leather banquettes, and tables spaced well apart. Hands-on owner Adi Giovannetti is pleased to help guests decide from the 100-item menu. Specialties include *malfatti* (ravioli with spinach and cheese in fresh tomato sauce), *linguine alla amatriciana* (in a tomato sauce flavored with onions and prosciutto), and baked red snapper with clams. Equivocators can choose a one-plate assortment of chef Luigi Campoverde's perfectly cooked pasta or risotto. Leave room for a homemade tiramisu or bittersweet-chocolate gelato dessert.

SPARKS STEAKHOUSE • 210 East 46th Street • 212-687-4855 One of New York's great steak houses, Sparks keeps its reputation by serving prime aged sirloin and juicy filet mignon to appreciative carnivores. Inside the mahogany-paneled restaurant, where original Hudson River School paintings decorate the walls, diners can also opt for lamb rib chops, veal loin chops, and fresh fish such as tuna and swordfish. Individually cooked side dishes, whether broccoli al dente or crispy hash browns, correspond to patrons' directives. With more than 100,000 bottles of wine from France, Italy, California, and Spain lining its impressive cellar, Sparks offers many affordable choices. Rich desserts include raspberries or strawberries romanoff and classic New York cheesecake.

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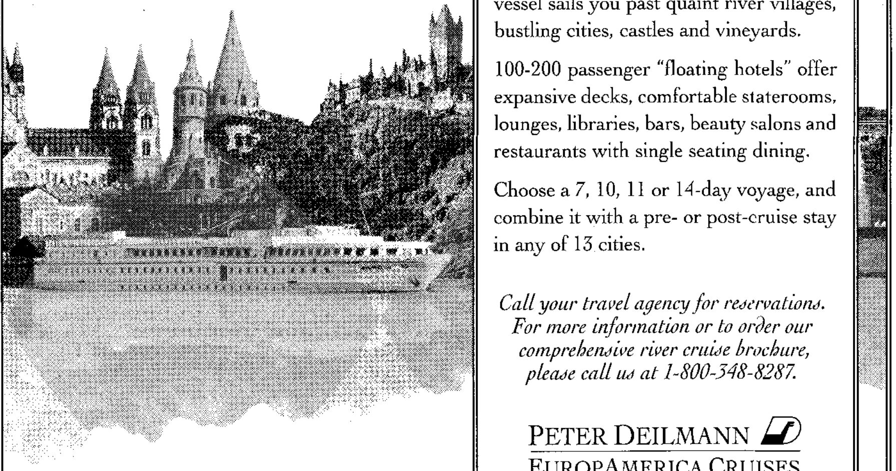

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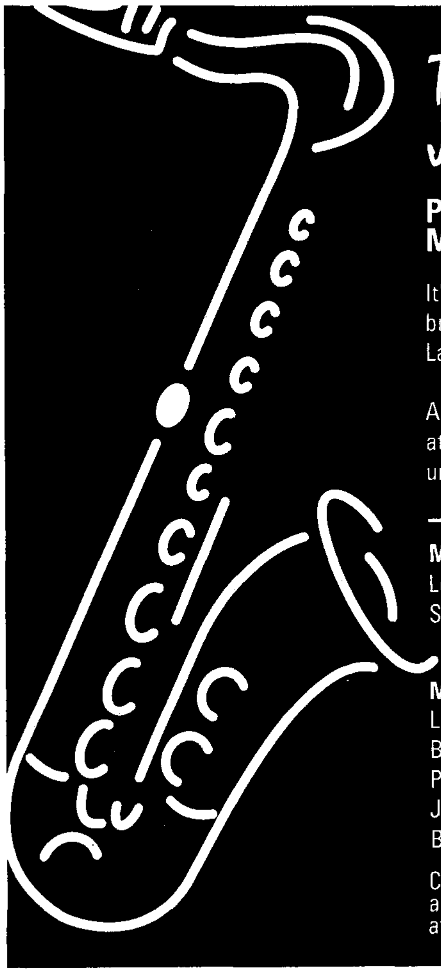

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Irving Plaza). April 25: **MAGNET**, featuring Velvet Underground drummer **MOE TUCKER**. May 1: Former "Saturday Night Live" guitarist-bandleader **G. E. SMITH**.

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—April 23: Listening to singer-songwriter **LORI CARSON'S** monologues makes you feel like you're eavesdropping; you know you should leave, but you're riveted by the stark, beautiful sadness of her voice and her lyrics. April 25: The hell-bent pure rockabilly of the **FLAT DUO JETS**. May 2: An evening of '57-Chevy-flavored rock with **OLD 97** (also in May 3), the **HANGDOGS**, and **FIVE CHINESE BROTHERS**. May 5: Dynamic singer-songwriter **WILLIE NILE**. May 6: **DODGY**, a popular English act that has the frenetic melodic energy of early Who, meets the **GIGOLO AUNTS**, a Boston combo you can always count on for tight harmonies and solid jangle pop (although it's been flirting with darker material lately).

S.O.B.'s, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—A great grass hut with a fruit-and-bamboo motif, dedicated to calypso, reggae, and the bossa nova. April 28: **TITO PUENTE**, the timbales king, who's been talking lately about semi-retirement. *¡Si claro!* Dining.

Tramps, 51 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—April 23: **SOUL ASYLUM**. Since its 1992 single "Runaway Train" earned a Grammy for Best Rock Song, this Minneapolis quartet has done the requisite thirty-city tour, performed at Woodstock II, and approached self-destruction. It's a tough business. April 24: **STEVE MORSE** is best known as the ur-guitarist for the defunct country-fusion band Dixie Dregs (né the Dregs), which was a great vehicle for his awesome, if occasionally pointless, technique. April 30: The wonderfully nuanced, narcotic pop of **THE SEA & CAKE**. May 2-3: "Cosmic Cowboy" **JERRY JEFF WALKER** wrote "Mr. Bojangles"; country newcomer **JACK INGRAM** should be so lucky.

ONLY CONNECT

Quarries and Catacombs of the City of Paris (http://www.france-cybermedia.com/kata)—"Arrête! C'est ici l'Empire de la mort." You won't encounter this greeting at Orly (though anyone who has tried to find an affordable cup of coffee, let alone a job, in Paris these days might find it apt). It appears instead well below ground, in the Ossuary at Place Denfert—the heart of the catacombs that contain the remains of millions of Parisians. The underground galleries are accessible via this site, which provides first-timers with both a virtual tour and a history (available in French and charmingly broken English).

By the end of the eighteenth century, the cemetery at the Church of the Innocents, in the Les Halles quarter, was overflowing so badly that the neighborhood's milk and wine were going bad; the stench of death was everywhere. The bones of the long dead (some dating to Roman times) were disinterred and transferred—poor cadavers in covered wagons, rich stiffs in regal coaches—to the city's underground quarries. (The move took fifteen months.) The ossuary was consecrated in 1786, and the catacombs opened to the living in 1814, though the authorities closed them again when early visitors got lost in the maze that extends for hundreds of kilometers underneath the city. They were reopened in the reign of Napoleon III.

There is a fine photo gallery here, and though the images of bones stacked like cordwood evoke the horrors of the present century, there are some bits of whimsy to be found, as in pictures of folks picnicking in the catacombs by candlelight, and the story of an 1897 underground concert held at the ossuary in which forty-five musicians performed funeral marches and dances. They couldn't have found a better venue.

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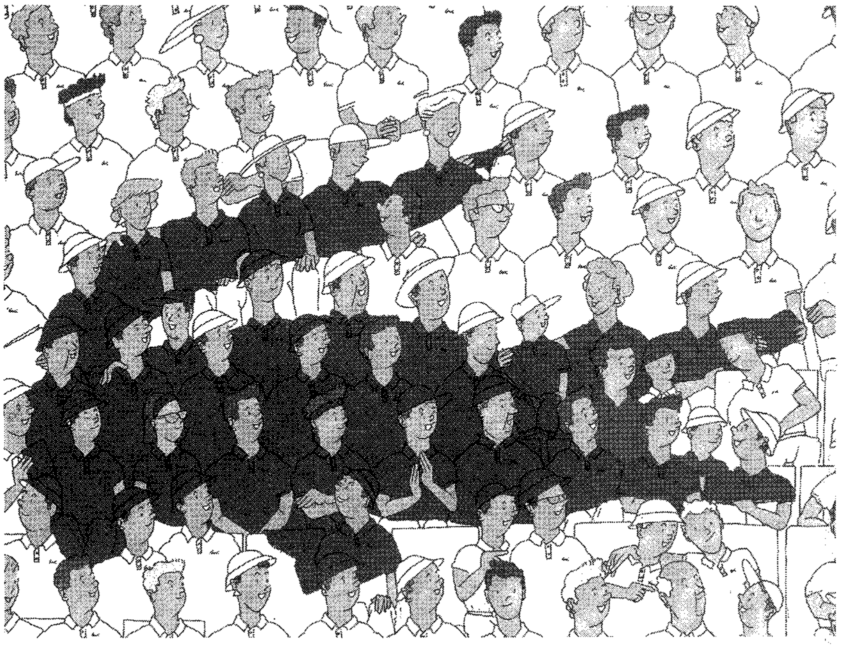

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ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—All that glisters is not gold: "Cartier: 1900-1939," an opulent exhibition of bijous from the great jewelry workshops of Paris, London, and New York, pretty much reaches the outer limits of glistering. Interestingly, the gaudiest objects here—a sparkling array of tiaras and diadems—were not bespoken by contessas and marquises but crafted to ensnare mad shoppers. Some of the bibelots, particularly those in exotic styles, are risibly tasteless: a trinket of a Japanese apple blossom, exhibited in a tiny vitrine, is indistinguishable from a tchotchke from Chinatown, except that it's made of ivory, enamel, gold, diamonds, moonstones, pink quartz, and rubellite. Through Aug. 3. . . . ¶ "Indian Court Painting: Sixteenth-Nineteenth Century," a small exhibition that richly rewards a climb to the attic of the museum's South Asian department. A remarkable range of styles is in evidence, from a charming watercolor of a prince riding an elephant, boldly composed with the pachyderm's noble profile filling the rectangle, to a grisly, apocalyptic image of Devi, the Great Goddess, in a cremation field, seated astride the freshly decapitated body of a sinner and surrounded by smoking bones; Shiva, her consort, cowers nearby, covered with ash and wearing a necklace of skulls. Through July 6. . . . ¶ "The Glory of Byzantium" is the museum's most spectacular exhibition in years, a colossal exploration of the art, history, and thought of what is known as the Second Golden Age of Byzantium, an era of unsurpassed imperial opulence which lasted from the mid-ninth century to the thirteenth. Through July 6. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—In an age of digital art, the humble collage can seem deceptively tame. Yet "The Photomontages of Hannah Höch" proves that the artist's imagination needs nothing more than scissors and a pot of glue—and stacks of newspapers and magazines. Through May 20. . . . ¶ "Projects: Architecture as Metaphor." An exhibition of work by seven artists, including James Casebere and Y. Z. Kami, whose recent creations make broad use of architectural plans, geometric structures, and the like. Through June 3. . . . ¶ "Manuel Alvarez Bravo." The great Mexican photographer's career spans eight decades; this retrospective visits all of them and includes rare platinum prints he made in the sixties from earlier negatives. Through May 18. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—"A Century of Sculpture: The Nasher Collection" features work by Brancusi, Giacometti, Matisse, Smith, and other twentieth-century artists. Through June 1. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway, at Prince St. (423-3500)—"Art/Fashion" presents garments and other piecework designed by visual artists. Through June 8. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—Clearly, the curators of the 1997 Biennial exhibition, Lisa Phillips and Louise Neri, have determined not to make the same mistakes as their immediate predecessors. In contradistinction to the haranguing 1993 show, with its noisy emphasis on identity politics, they have stressed a more poetic (or more palatable?) approach to social issues—e.g., Wendy Ewald's photographs (which attempt to depict the dreams of underprivileged children) and Shazia Sikander's updated Persian miniatures (which investigate, for example, the place of women in a traditional society); the downside is that political engagement of any kind gets lost. This Biennial is, on the whole, hipper and smarter.

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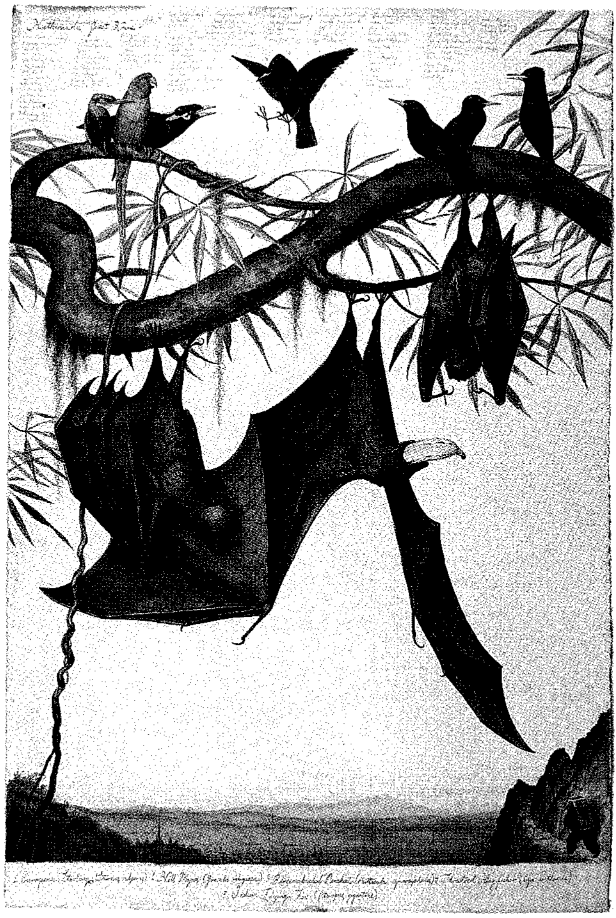

WALTON FORD: *Paintings and watercolors, at Kasmin (74 Grand Street; 219-3219), through May 10.*

The Latest Fords—In the past, Walton Ford has divided his output between lush pastorales on troubling American themes (plantation vistas, first-contact frontier panoramas) and iridescent, pseudo-Smithsonian closeups. His latest show combines the two styles. "Some people liked the landscapes; some people liked the birds," he told us recently. "Now it's like Reese's Pieces." His Old Master appropriations (the irony of Breughel and Bosch in the background, with Audubon's stunning ornithological Darwinism up front) gain a new piquancy in the current context: after a six-month odyssey through India, his studies of serene Indian birds like the bustard and the hornbill pestered by European starlings and woodpeckers offer both allegories of cultural misapprehension and gentle self-mockery. For example, in "Kathmandu Guest House" (above), the starlings flutter toward the hill mynah and blossom-headed parakeet, unaware, apparently, of the darker, ravenous fruit bats. Far below, a Sherpa carries a case of Heineken up a Nepalese mountain.

What the show lacks—and no doubt lacks deliberately—is any sense of clearly articulated argument. Through June 1. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St. (517-2742)—"Gods, Kings, and Tigers: The Art of Kotah" offers works never before exhibited outside of India which chronicle the tiger hunts, royal battles, and erotic assignations of warrior kings allied to the Mughal emperors of Delhi. Opens April 26 and continues through July 20. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (860-6894)—You may not recognize his name, but the industrial designer Henry Dreyfuss (1904-72) had a greater impact on the way the world looks today than any fine artist of the century. For Dreyfuss, form followed function only if it made for an elegant line. This informative, stylishly installed exhibition spans the period of America's industrial golden age, from the futuristic idealism of the Twentieth Century Limited (the high-speed train immortalized by Howard Hawks, with help from John Barrymore and Carole Lombard) to the homely simplicity of the Princess phone—not to mention the John Deere tractor, the Westclox Big Ben alarm clock, or the Polaroid Swinger. Through Aug. 31. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St. (685-0008)—"Private Histories: Four Centuries of Journal Keeping" presents the personal records of such diarists as Charlotte Brontë, Victor Hugo's daughter Adèle, Walt Whitman, and Sylvia Plath. Through Aug. 31. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10:30 to 5; Saturdays, 10:30 to 6; Sundays, noon to 6.)

Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (534-1672)—"A Dream Well Planned: The Empire State Building" chronicles the "world's greatest tower," from the destruction of the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, which formerly occupied the site, through the vertiginous construction of the eighty-six-floor building with its two-hundred-foot mast (intended to function as a mooring for dirigibles), to the 1945 crash of a B-25 bomber into its 79th floor. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, uptown and downtown galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; Chelsea galleries are generally closed Tuesdays and open Sundays.)

Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945) and **Lea Grundig** (1906-77)—This powerful exhibition of drawings and prints by two leading German Expressionists displays a more intimate approach to political art than that espoused by the movement's men. Kollwitz's lithographs of women struggling with the figure of Death are visually forceful, but as protests against the suffering of the poor they seem rather bland and generalized. Grundig is a fascinating figure: she created several series of etchings about the barbarous injustice of the Nazis and secretly printed and distributed them herself, until she finally fled for Palestine, in 1939. "Gestapo in the House," depicting two women and a girl cowering behind doors, positions the viewer in the intruding policeman's shoes. It's rather a crude work, both technically and psychologically, but it unleashes its message with a mighty force. Through May 31. (Galerie St. Etienne, 24 W. 57th St. 245-6734.)

Aristide Maillol (1861-1944)—An elegant show of life-size sculptures and statuettes. Maillol remains transitional in the history of sculpture, pitched between nineteenth-century academicism and modernist reduction. His female nudes are distinguished as much by their serene coldness as by their voluptuousness. Perhaps the ultimate in spiritually elevating good-taste art. Through June 7. (C & M, 45 E. 78th St. 861-0020.)

Michael Mazur—Luminous, well-ventilated abstractions that continually verge on landscape—or are they landscapes dripping into abstraction? The gorgeous palette, embracing hot oranges and coral pinks, wet greens and dusky blues, recalls Philip Guston and Joan Mitchell. Through May 3. (Ryan, 24 W. 57th St. 397-0669.)

Sophie Ryder—Sculptures of minotaurs and hares, either cast in bronze, using found objects (files, bicycle chains, watch springs), or, less successfully, formed from aluminum wire; for all their whimsical charm, they don't quite attain the psychological depths they aim at. The artist also paints: at the gallery's entrance hangs a mysterious painted collage of a "lady hare"—a woman with a hare's head—standing in a glade, enchanted by a full moon that has sailed straight out of a drawing by Redon. Through May 3. (O'Hara, 41 E. 57th St. 355-3330. Open Mondays.)

Lenore Tawney / Martha Madigan—Neo-Dadaist assemblages incorporating birds' wings, eggshells, and animal bones, as well as linen weavings and torn-paper collages, by a ninety-year-old artist with a delicate touch and an unerring eye. The assemblages radiate spirituality and sincerity, but there's nothing in them one hasn't seen before. The weavings are tasteful but so understated that they threaten to vanish if you look too hard. Best of all are the collages, which employ refined calligraphy, in both English and Chinese, done in shimmering metallic inks. / Double-exposed solar photograms of human silhouettes filled with leafy patterns. Both shows through May 31. (Rosenfeld, 24 W. 57th St. 247-0082.)

Short List—**TOM CHRISTOPHER,** David Findlay, 984 Madison Ave., at 77th St. 249-2909. Open Mondays; through May 3. . . . **RACKSTRAW DOWNES** and **RED GROOMS,** Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. 541-4900. Open Mondays; both shows through May 3. . . . **GRACE HARTIGAN,** ACA, 41 E. 57th St. 644-8300. Through May 3. . . . **DENNIS OPPENHEIM,** Helman, 20 W. 57th St. 245-2888. Through May 3. . . . **FAIRFIELD PORTER,** De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 262-5050. Through May 23. . . . **RICHARD STANKIEWICZ,** Zabriskie, 41 E. 57th St. 752-1223. Through May 3. . . . **DONALD SULTAN,** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. 794-0550. Through May 3.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

Doug Aitken—Two installations by the video artist. "Diamond Sea" canvasses the weird, seemingly extraterrestrial landscape of the Namib Desert, home to one of the world's richest diamond mines. "Cathouse" consists of a Naumanesque maze in which every surface has been carpeted; two monitors show various people looking very, very nervous and jittery. Through April 26. (303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-1121. Closed Sundays.)

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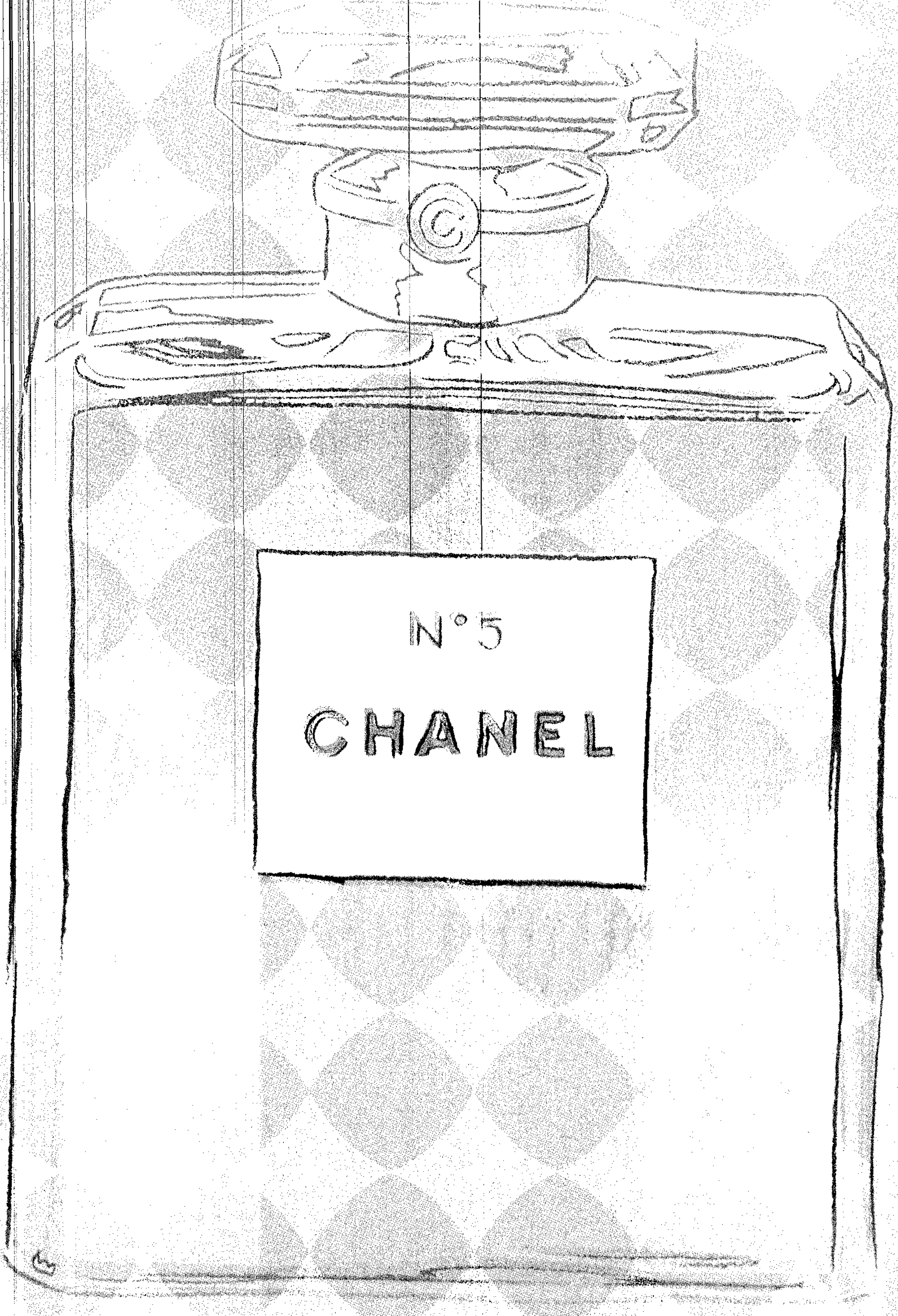

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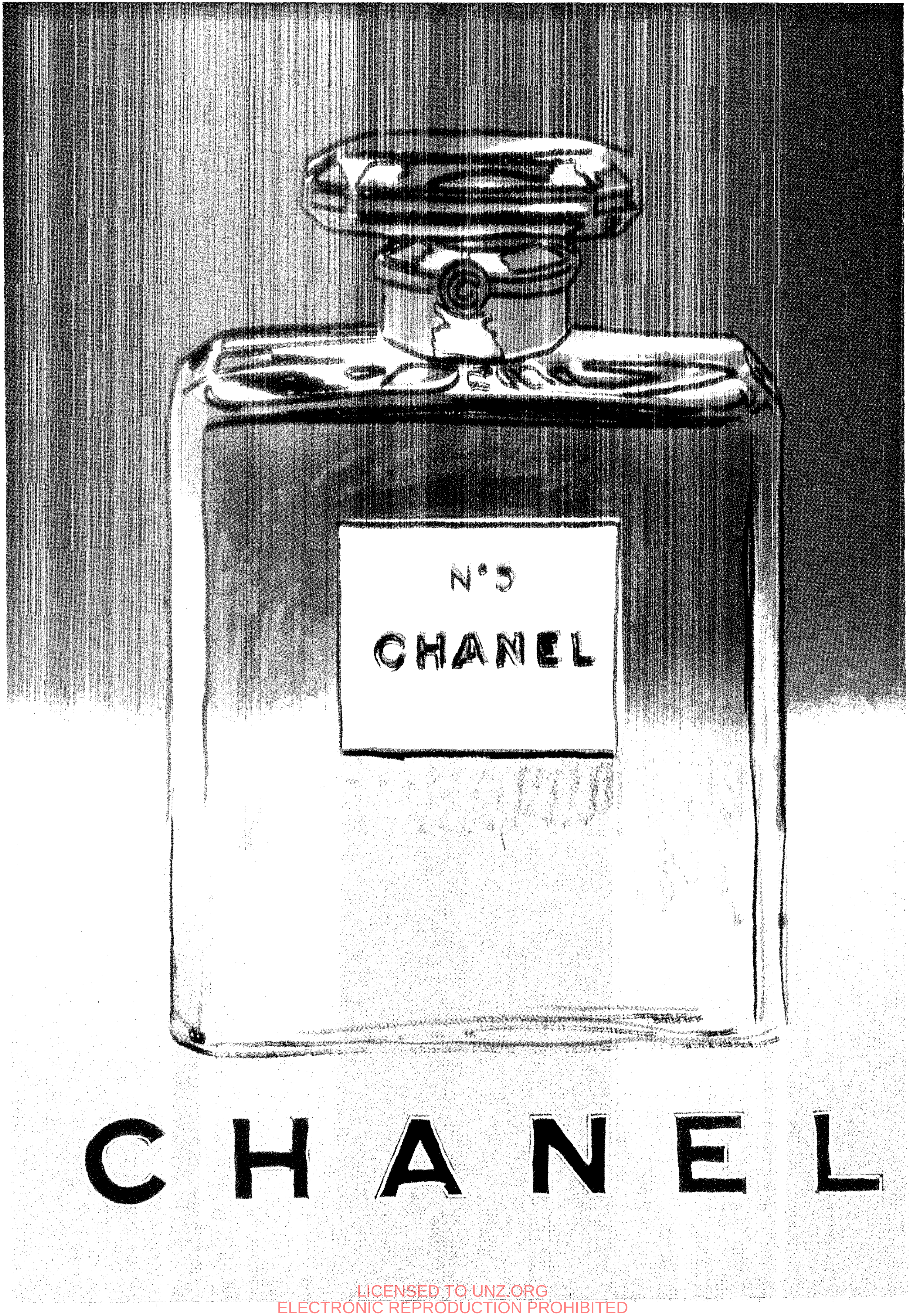
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George Stoll—Paintings, sculptures, and works on paper, all referring to the forms and patterns associated with that humblest of staples, toilet paper. The artist often takes the already pale and saccharine colors and motifs of toilet-paper design and exaggerates them, but just slightly. His bright turquoise and lavender versions stand out, and they could conceivably find a mass market. All in all, a demonstration of the rehabilitation of bad taste as good taste. Through May 10. (Morris Healy, 530 W. 22nd St. 243-3753.)

Short List—**SHONAGH ADELMAN,** Kirkland 504 W. 22nd St. 627-3930. Through May 31. . . . **STEPHAN BALKENHOL,** Gladstone, 515 W. 24th St. 206-9300. Through May 31. . . . **LEWIS DE SOTO,** Maynes, 529 W. 20th St. 741-3318. Through May 11. . . . **JAMES HYDE,** Baldacci, 521 W. 21st St. 463-0919. Through May 24. . . . **JOAN JONAS,** Hearn, 530 W. 22nd St. 727-7366. Through May 18. . . . **TONY SMITH,** Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 255-1105. Open Tuesdays, closed Sundays; through June 7.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Oleg Kulik—"I Bite America and America Bites Me," a performance/installation by the Russian artist. The title refers to Joseph Beuys's famous performance piece "I Like America and America Likes Me" (1974), in which the artist shared quarters with a coyote in a New York gallery. Kulik, on the other hand, impersonates a dog, and apparently a vicious one—visitors may don protective garments in order to enter his doghouse and interact with him. Definitely not for the faint of heart. Through April 26. (Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 343-7300.)

Ernesto Neto—Mixed-medium sculptures. The Brazilian artist has filled nylon hose with a given powder (turmeric, annatto, clove, flour) which seeps out onto the floor and forms a nimbus around the engorged stocking. Some lie flaccid on the floor; others have been attached to the ceiling and stretched taut. The result is very pretty and vaguely outer-spacey. It smells nice, too. Through April 26. (Bonakdar, 130 Prince St. 925-8035.)

Short List—**SUZANNE ETKIN,** Holly Solomon, 172 Mercer St. 941-5777. Through May 31. . . . **BARBARA GRINELL,** A.I.R., 40 Wooster St. 966-0799. Through May 3. . . . **NICHOLAS KAHN AND RICHARD SELESNICK,** Knowlton, 568 Broadway. 966-2625. Through May 3. . . . **JOSEPH KOSUTH,** Sean Kelly, 43 Mercer St. 343-2405. Through May 17. . . . **KATHARINE KUHARIC,** P.P.O.W, 532 Broadway. 941-8642. Through May 24. . . . **SEAN LANDERS,** Rosen, 130 Prince St. 941-0203. Through May 31. . . . **JUNE LEAF,** Thorp, 103 Prince St. 431-6880. Through May 17. . . . **MARY PUTNAM,** Bibro, 584 Broadway. 941-1734. Through May 17. . . . **LISA DEANNE SMITH,** White Columns, 154 Christopher St. 924-4212. Through May 4. . . . **FRED TOMASELLI,** Tilton, 49 Greene St. 941-1775. Through May 17. . . . **EMMETT WILLIAMS,** Harvey, 537 Broadway. 925-7651. Through May 3.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Christie's—April 23-24: Japanese paintings and decorative art. . . . ¶ April 24: Collectible wines, offered in conjunction with Zachy's. . . . ¶ April 30: Art works and furnishings from the Bel Air home of the late Lord White of Hull. (Park Ave. at 59th St. 546-1000.)

Sotheby's—April 23-24: An arcade sale of modestly priced furniture and decorative art. . . . ¶ May 6-7: An important sale of contemporary art, including works by Rothko, de Kooning, Diebenkorn, and Warhol. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Tina Barney—In these new tableaux, the photographer explores mildly interesting new territory: her subjects appear in the same kinds of comfortable household spaces as before, only now they are naked. With their pained, uncomfortable, or just blank poses, these men and women are fish out of water. One woman riding bareback is having fun, and her enjoyment helps the picture a lot. In another solemn but powerful image, a man stands with his son (clothed) behind him in the middle of his plush TV- and playroom as if to assert his male dominance in a kingdom of toys. Through May 10. (Borden, 560 Broadway. 431-0166.)

Helen Levitt / Édouard Baldus (1813-89)—Forty vintage New York prints from 1936 to 1945. / Twenty architectural photographs of Paris, by one of the early masters. Both shows open April 25. (Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. 226-1220.)

Arne Svenson—A wry and affecting series comprising black-and-white views of a depopulated Las Vegas: no neon, glitz, or excess, just the ghostly residue of it all. In several pictures, the photographer gives you the option of drawing metaphorical conclusions: a beautiful vortex in a Desert Inn hot tub could be a gambler's black hole; the mirrored windows of a porn mall reflect the devil's town itself. Through May 10. (Saul, 560 Broadway. 431-0747.)

John Szarkowski / William Christenberry—"Mr. Bristol's Barn," Spartan black-and-white exterior views and details of a mid-nineteenth-century timber barn in rural New York. Accompanying the images are priceless excerpts from the diary of Mr. Bristol's neighbor, Mr. Blinn ("This morning wife got out her old mare, and went over to Mrs. Pratts"); the pictures and text, together with the artist's introduction to the related book, form a deeply felt eulogy to a vanished way of life. / A spare, evocative exhibit of seven small Brownie photographs from the sixties, of Southern churches, domestic hearthsides, and gourd trees, along with four new whitewashed sculptures of imagined churchlike buildings, three recent drawings, and a large found sign. Both shows through May 10. (Pace Wildenstein MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 759-7999.)

"Brooklyn, New York, U.S.A."—A delightful salon-style exhibit of sixty-six pictures made since the turn of the century. Through May 3. (Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. 517-3766.)

"The Fords: Fifty Years in Fashion"—Famous models (Carmen Dell'Orefice, Dovima, Jean Shrimpton, Lauren Hutton) by famous photographers (Horst, David Bailey, Helmut Newton, Richard Avedon). Through May 10. (Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. 966-6223.)

"The Sex Show"—Some choice examples of one of twentieth-century photography's prime subjects: voyeuristic, fetishistic, classical, and just plain anatomical. Nan Goldin and Larry Clark are here, of course, as are the incomparably kinky Pierre Molinier and the mysterious Gerard Petrus Fieret. Paul Outerbridge, Jr.,'s 1939 color "Nude with Cat" (a kitten, really) is a blithe gem, and Josef Breitenbach's downy "Reclining Nude," from his 1950 series, "This Beautiful Landscape," represents the ne plus ultra of black-and-white sensuality. Through May 17. (Richardson, 560 Broadway. 343-1255.)

International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. (860-1777)—"Helen Levitt: Crosstown," a retrospective of the premier New York street photographer's career. . . . ¶ "Fast Forward: Growing Up in the Shadow of Hollywood," Lauren Greenfield's recent series on Los Angeles youth. Both shows start April 25. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Short List—**DAVID ARMSTRONG,** Marks, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St. 861-9455. Through May 23. . . . **NANCY BURSON,** Ricco/Maresca, 152 Wooster St. 780-0071. Through May 17. . . . **VAN DEREN COKE,** Greenberg, 120 Wooster St. 334-0010. Through May 17. . . . **CHRISTOPHER GIGLIO,** Danziger, 130 Prince St. 226-0056. Through May 30. . . . **BRUCE GILDEN,** Gallery 292, 120 Wooster St. 431-0292. Through May 17. Also at Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051. Opens Saturdays at noon; through May 10. . . . **INEZ VAN LAMSWEERDE,** Marks, 523 W. 24th St. 243-0200. Through May 17. . . . **CLIFFORD ROSS,** Houk Friedman, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. 628-5300. Opens April 24. . . . **JUAN USLÉ,** Cheim & Read, 521 W. 23rd St. 242-7727. Open Tuesdays, closed Sundays; through May 31. . . . **CATHERINE WAGNER,** International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. 860-1777. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8; through June 15.

(See the museum listings for a photography exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

(The box-office number for Alice Tully Hall is 875-5050; for Avery Fisher Hall, 875-5030; for Carnegie Hall and Weill Recital Hall, 247-7800; and for Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St., 501-3330.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—**FAUST,** with Gwynne Geyer, Richard Leech, Dwayne Croft, and Robert Lloyd; conducted by Julius Rudel. (April 23 at 8.) . . . **MADAMA BUTTERFLY,** with Michele Crider, Franco Farina, and Frederick Burchinal; John Fiore. (April 24 at 7:30 and April 29 at 8.) . . . With Alan Opie instead of Mr. Burchinal. (May 2 at 7:30. . . . **NOTE:** This performance is followed by the annual Opera Ball.) . . . **DAS RHEINGOLD,** with Hei-Kyung Hong, Michelle DeYoung, Birgitta Svendén, Philip Langridge, Graham Clark, Ekkehard Wlaschiha, and James Morris; James Levine. (April 25 at 8.) . . . With Hanna Schwarz instead of Ms. Svendén and Siegfried Jerusalem instead of Mr. Langridge. (May 5 at 8.) . . . **FEDORA,** with Mirella Freni, Ainhoa Arteta, Plácido Domingo, and Mr. Croft; Roberto Abbado. (April 26 at 12:30.) . . . With Fabio Armiliato instead of Mr. Domingo. (May 1 at 8.) . . . **GÖTTERDÄMMERUNG,** with Hildegard Behrens, Ms. Schwarz, Ms. Svendén, Wolfgang Schmidt, Mr. Wlaschiha, and Matti Salminen; Mr. Levine. (April 26 at 6.) . . . With Gabriele Schnaut instead of Ms. Behrens. (May 3 at 6.) . . . **DIE WALKÜRE,** with Ms. Schnaut, Deborah Voigt, Ms. Schwarz, Mr. Domingo, Mr. Morris, and Mr. Salminen; Mr. Levine. (April 28 at 6.) . . . With Ms. Behrens, Ms. Voigt, Ms. Schwarz, Gary Lakes, Mr. Morris, and Mr. Salminen; Mr. Levine. (May 6 at 6.) . . . **SIEGFRIED,** with Ms. Schnaut, Heidi Grant Murphy, Ms. Svendén, Mr. Jerusalem, Mr. Clark, Mr. Morris, and Mr. Salminen; Mr. Levine. (April 30 at 6.) . . . **RUSALKA,** by Dvořák, with Renée Fleming, Frances Ginzer, Dolora Zajick, Chris Merritt, and Sergei Koptchak; Mr. Fiore. (May 3 at noon.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000. The season ends on May 10.)

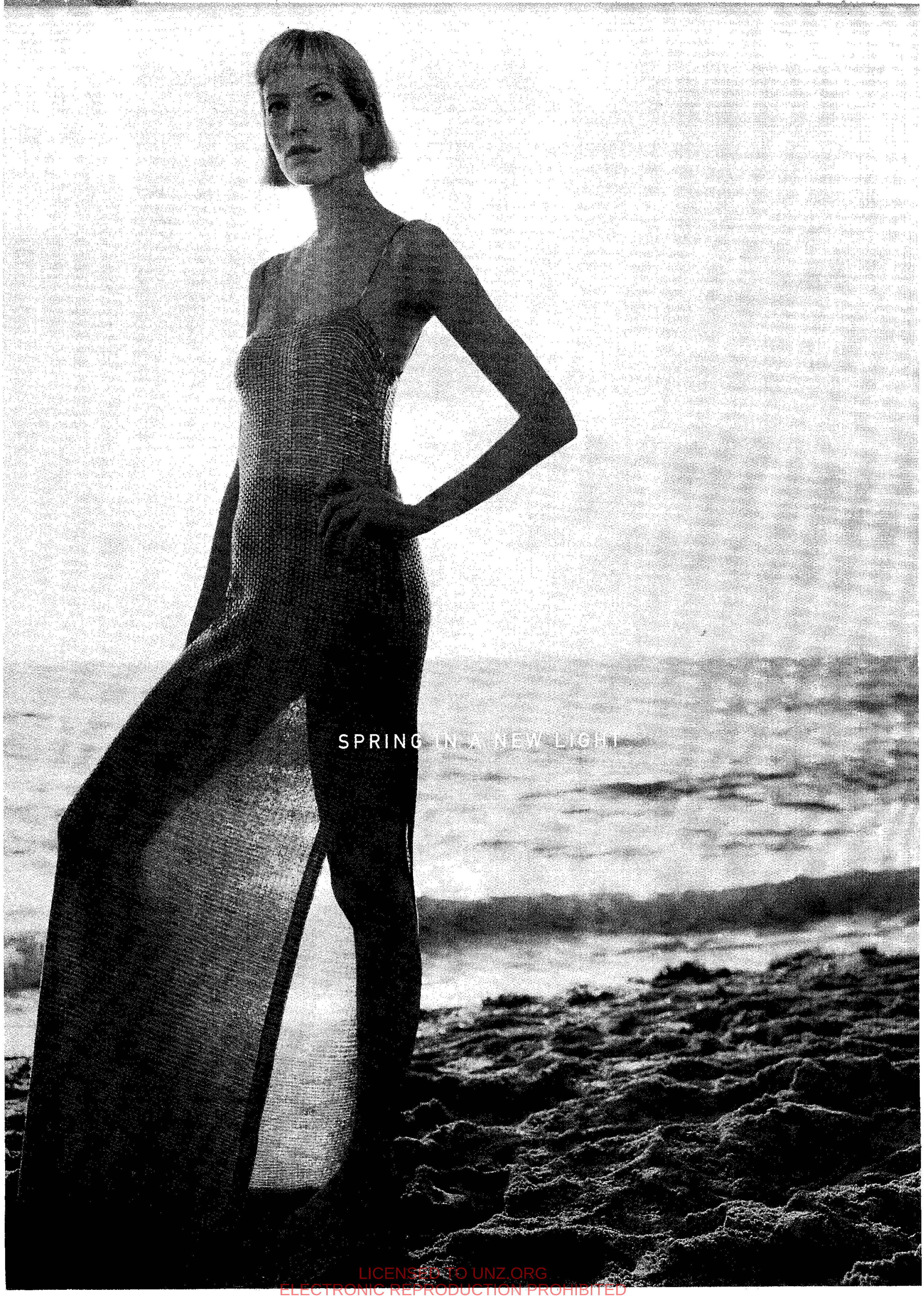
New York City Opera—Final performances of the season. **THE MIKADO.** (April 23 at 8.) . . . **THE VISIT OF THE OLD LADY,** by Gottfried von Einem. (April 24 at 8.) . . . **RIGOLETTO.** (April 25 at 8.) . . . **MADAMA BUTTERFLY.** (April 26 at 1:30.) . . . A double bill of Orff's **CARMINA BURANA** and Weill's **THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS.** (April 26 at 8.) . . . **TURANDOT.** (April 27 at 1:30.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

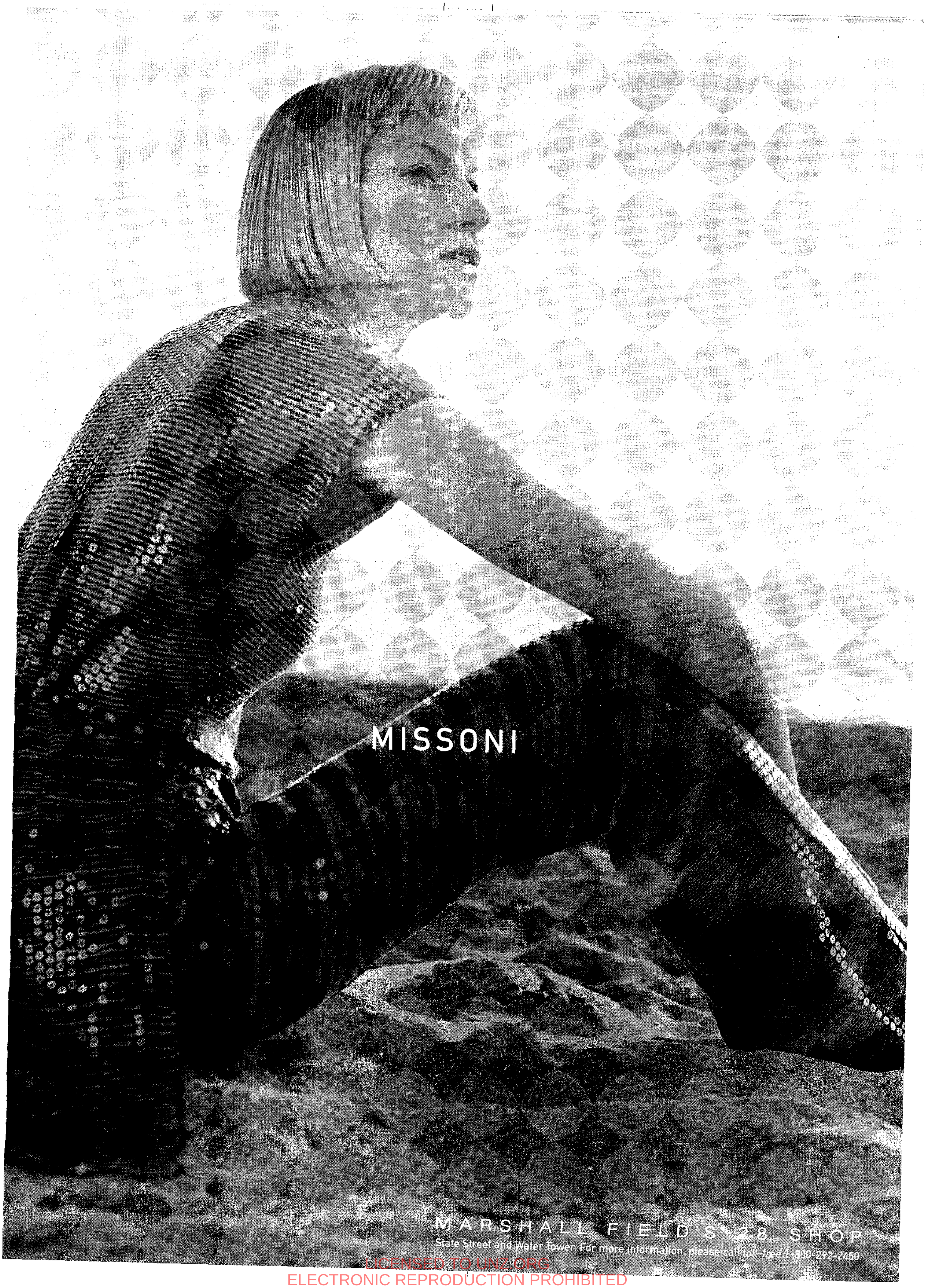
Manhattan School of Music Opera Theatre—Presenting Daniel Catán's "La Hija de Rappaccini," after the short story by Hawthorne and the play by Octavio Paz; performed in Spanish, with English supertitles. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. 749-2802, ext. 428. April 23 and April 25 at 8 and April 27 at 2:30.)

"Oedipus"—A rare presentation of Harry Partch's microtonal music drama for unusual instruments (in the composer's third and final revision), in a concert performance by Newband and the Purchase Contemporary Players. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. April 24 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—John Adams, one of the few to have made the transition from minimalism to a complete and captivating compositional style, is the focus of this year's Composer Week at the Philharmonic. The program opens with his "Slonimsky's Earbox," a brief work dedicated to the late musical lexicographer Nicolas Slonimsky and incorporating tonal combinations from that author's "Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns" (published in 1947, the year Adams was born). Also on the program are Adams's Violin Concerto (featuring Gidon Kremer), Ives's Symphony No. 3, and Duke Ellington's "Harlem." Leonard Slatkin conducts. (Avery Fisher Hall. May 1 and May 3 at 8, May 2 at 2, and May 6 at 7:30. . . . **NOTE:** Singers will perform excerpts from two of Mr. Adams's operas in pre-concert recitals, on May 1 and May 3 at 6:30, and on May 6 at 6.


SPRING IN A NEW LIGHT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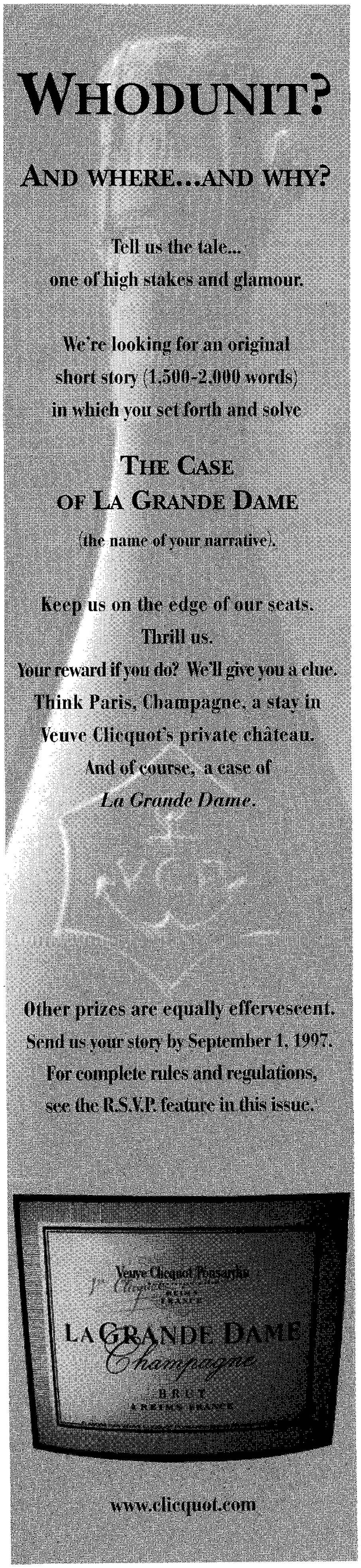

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On May 2 at 1 Mr. Adams will be interviewed onstage by the composer Tania León.)

ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY—Hans Vonk occupies the podium at Carnegie Hall in his first New York appearances as the orchestra's music director. April 23 at 8: Schumann's Cello Concerto (with Heinrich Schiff) and Bruckner's Symphony No. 7. . . . ¶ April 24 at 8: Ellen Taaffe Zwilich's Symphony No. 1, Berlioz's "Les Nuits d'Été" (with mezzo-soprano Theodora Hanslowe), and Stravinsky's "The Firebird."

BROOKLYN PHILHARMONIC—Robert Spano conducts the orchestra and the New York Choral Society in Britten's "Spring" Symphony and Ravel's "Daphnis et Chloé." (Brooklyn Academy of Music, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. April 25-26 at 8. . . . ¶ Carnegie Hall. May 4 at 2.)

CONTEMPORARY A CAPPELLA SOCIETY OF AMERICA—Six collegiate singing groups, each the winner of one of the society's regional competitions, go head to head in the national championship concert. (Carnegie Hall. April 26 at 8.)

LOU HARRISON CELEBRATION—Lincoln Center starts its festivities for the composer's eightieth birthday, which falls on May 14. April 26 at 8: The Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Dennis Russell Davies, plays an all-Harrison concert, including his Piano Concerto (with Ursula Oppens). (Alice Tully Hall.) . . . ¶ April 27 at 3: Mr. Harrison joins musicologists Mantle Hood and Carol Oja, pianist Michael Boriskin, and choreographer Mark Morris for a chat. (Kaplan Penthouse, Rose Building. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ April 28 at 7:30: Mr. Boriskin performs many of the composer's piano works. (Walter Reade Theatre. For information about tickets, call 875-5050.)

HANOVER BAND—Nicholas McGegan conducts the period-instrument orchestra in Schubert's "Unfinished" Symphony, several arias by Mozart (with contralto Natalie Stutzmann), and Beethoven's Symphony No. 6. (Avery Fisher Hall. April 27 at 3.)

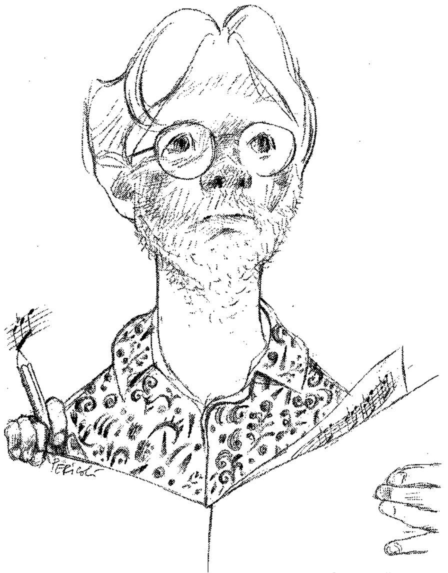
PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA—Wolfgang Sawallisch conducts Wolfgang Rihm's "Ernster Gesang," Schumann's Piano Concerto (with Alfred Brendel), and Brahms's Symphony No. 3. (Carnegie Hall. April 28 at 8.) . . . **NOTE:** On April 27 at 2:30, at Weill Recital Hall, members of the orchestra join their music director—as pianist—in chamber works by Clara Schumann and Brahms.

NEW YORK POPS—Skitch Henderson conducts Broadway favorites. (Carnegie Hall. April 29 at 7:30. A benefit concert.)

ABSOLUTE ENSEMBLE—Kristjan Järvi leads Milhaud's "La Création du Monde," Strauss's "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme," and a new work by Charles Coleman. (Merkin Concert Hall. April 30 at 8.)

SOUSA REDUX—Keith Brion (disguised as the March King) leads his forty-five-member New Sousa Band (wearing replicas of the old Sousa Band's uniforms) in a Sousa-style pops concert that comprises music by Jerome Kern, George M. Cohan, and (of course) Sousa. (Lehman College Concert Hall, the Bronx. May 2 at 2. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 718-960-8833.)

"CELEBRATION OF FREEDOM"—In the mid-nineteenth century, Brooklyn was widely known as the City of Churches, a description that a stroll through historically preserved Brooklyn Heights confirms. For some reason, 1847 was an especially fertile year for new churches, and now three of the neighborhood's most imposing houses of worship—Plymouth Church of the Pilgrims (whose first minister, Henry Ward Beecher, raged famously against slavery), Grace Church, and the Church of St. Ann and the Holy Trinity—are celebrating their sesquicentennials. A highlight of Plymouth Church's Sesquicentennial Weekend is a concert that includes performances by three choirs (the church's own, plus guest ensembles from Harlem and Philadelphia), soprano Cecilia Birt, and organist Marvin Mills. (Orange St. between Hicks and Henry Sts. 718-403-9546. May 2 at 8. . . . **NOTE:** For information about the weekend's lectures and historical reënactments, call 718-624-4743.)



John Adams, celebrated during the New York Philharmonic's Composer Week.

LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC—At Avery Fisher Hall, Esa-Pekka Salonen conducting. May 2 at 8: Bartók's Piano Concerto No. 2 (with Yefim Bronfman) and Bruckner's Symphony No. 4. . . . ¶ May 4 at 3: Mussorgsky's "Night on Bald Mountain" and Stravinsky's "Le Sacre du Printemps," as well as Mr. Salonen's "LA Variations." . . . **NOTE:** On May 1 at 8, at Alice Tully Hall, Mr. Salonen leads the Los Angeles Philharmonic New Music Group in works by Ligeti, Xenakis, and others.

ORPHEUS CHAMBER ORCHESTRA—The conductorless ensemble performs Kodály's "Dances of Galánta," several Handel arias (with mezzo-soprano Jennifer Larmore), and Schubert's "Death and the Maiden" String Quartet (as expanded by Mahler for string orchestra). (Carnegie Hall. May 3 at 8.)

ORATORIO SOCIETY OF NEW YORK—Lyndon Woodside directs Dvořák's Stabat Mater. (Carnegie Hall. May 6 at 8.)

RECITALS

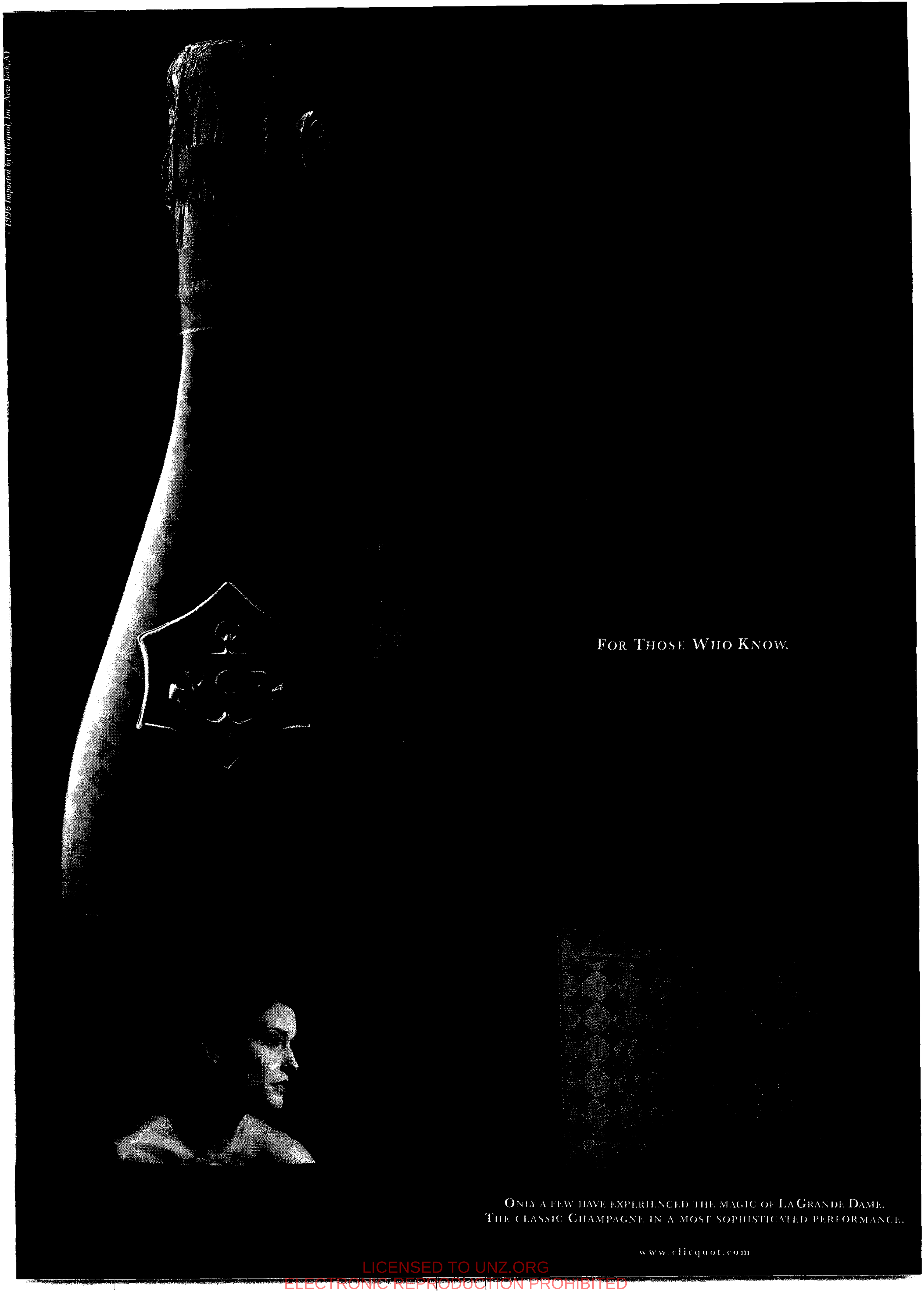
ST. LUKE'S CHAMBER ENSEMBLE—April 23 at 6:30: Music by Persichetti, Janáček, and Joseph Pehrson. (Dia Center for the Arts, 548 W. 22nd St. For information about tickets, call 840-7470.) . . . ¶ May 4 at 2: Terry Riley joins the ensemble as singer and keyboard player for his "Remember This" (extended and revised from its original, 1977 version), in a concert that also includes Janáček's "Mládí" and Dvořák's G-Major String Quintet. (Brooklyn Museum of Art, Eastern Parkway. For information about tickets, call 840-7470.) . . . ¶ May 6 at 8: The ensemble returns to its birthplace, the Church of St. Luke In-the-Fields, to play Mozart's Oboe Quartet and to assist the church's choir (directed by David Shuler) in Mozart's "Vesperae Solennes de Confessore" and C-Major Missa Brevis (K. 220). (487 Hudson St., at Grove St. 633-2167.)

EMERSON STRING QUARTET—The foursome offers quartets by Beethoven (the "Harp" and the "Serioso") and Janáček (his First), as well as the famous Adagio from Barber's Quartet. (Alice Tully Hall. April 23 at 8.)

NEW YORK FESTIVAL OF SONG—An all-Russian program. (Weill Recital Hall. April 23 at 8.)

MANNES CONTEMPORARY MUSIC FESTIVAL—April 23: The Mannes Percussion Ensemble performs works by Reich, Takemitsu, and others. . . . ¶ April 24: NewMusicMannes presents compositions by young Europeans. . . . ¶ April 25: Pianist and composer Henry Martin. (Mannes College of Music, 150 W. 85th St. Evenings at 8. No tickets necessary.)

TULLIO PERICOLI



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Organ at St. Bart's—Recitals by Daniel Moriarty (on April 23 at 8) and William Trafka (on April 30 at 8). (St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave. at 50th St. 378-0248.)

Bargemusic—April 24 at 7:30 and April 27 at 4: Solo and chamber works by Beethoven, Schubert, and Dvořák (his E-Flat-Major *Piano Quartet, Op. 87*), performed by violinist Carmit Zori, violist Robert Rinehart, cellist Carter Brey, and pianist Stephanie Brown. . . . ¶ May 1 at 6:30 and May 4 at 4: Bargemusic is turning twenty, and its founder and captain, the unsinkable Olga Bloom, continues to navigate her craft through the shoals and the deeps of chamber music. This program features two enduring piano trios, Mendelssohn's in D Minor and Brahms's in C Major, performed by violinist Mark Peskanov, cellist Alban Gerhardt, and pianist Anne-Marie McDermott. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-4061. . . . **note:** The May 1 event is a benefit candlelit dinner concert.)

Piano Circus—A British ensemble of six—count 'em, six—pianos, purveying contemporary works by Graham Fitkin, David Lang, Max Richter, Julia Wolfe, Juliet Palmer, and Steve Reich. (Alice Tully Hall. April 24 at 8.)

Dawn Upshaw—The soprano, with classical and folk musicians assisting, offers a variegated program: Crumb's "Ancient Voices of Children" (in a staging by Bill T. Jones), art songs by six contemporary American composers, and folk songs. (Carnegie Hall. April 25 at 7:30.)

Beaux Arts Trio—The ensemble offers an all-Beethoven program comprising the Piano Trios in C Minor (Op. 1, No. 3) and B-Flat Major (the "Archduke"), as well as the "Kakadu" Variations. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. April 25-26 at 8.)

Hespèrion XX—Viola da gamba player Jordi Savall directs his early-music ensemble in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim music from the Spain of the thirteenth-century monarch Alfonso X ("El Sabio"). (Alice Tully Hall. April 28 at 8.)

Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center—A trio of all-Brahms concerts at Alice Tully Hall. April 29 at 7:30: Late works, performed by clarinettist David Shifrin, baritone William Stone, pianist David Golub, and organist Anthony Newman. . . . ¶ May 2 at 8 and May 4 at 5: The G-Major String Quintet, the songs with obbligato viola (featuring soprano Jessye Norman and violist Pinchas Zukerman), and the Piano Quintet.

Music by Ellen Taaffe Zwilich—The composer is on hand to hear and discuss several of her chamber works, as well as pieces by Beethoven, Gershwin, and Thelonious Monk. (Weill Recital Hall. April 30 at 8.)

Festival Chamber Music Society—Performing works by Prokofiev, Mozart, and Dvořák. (Merkin Concert Hall. May 1 at 8.)

Lark String Quartet—At Merkin Concert Hall. May 3 at 9: The group plays and discusses the Bulgarian composer Penka Kouneva's Quartet No. 1. . . . ¶ May 5 at 7: Works by Brahms and Ms. Kouneva.

New York Philharmonic Ensembles—Members of the orchestra, plus a few guests (including soprano Tomoko Masur, the Philharmonic's First Lady), perform works by Telemann, Spohr, Arnold Cooke, and Schubert. (Merkin Concert Hall. May 4 at 3.)

Anne Azéma—The soprano, with several collaborators on early instruments, offers music from medieval France. (Cloisters, Fort Tryon Park. 650-2290. May 4 at 3.)

Florence Gould Hall Chamber Players—A recital of songs and chamber music by Honegger, Poulenc, Milhaud, and others. (55 E. 59th St. 399-6160. May 4 at 3.)

Lotsa Schubert—Carnegie Hall gives over its hundred and sixth birthday (May 5) to a full afternoon of chamber music by Schubert, performed in the upstairs recital space by nearly two dozen young instrumentalists already embarked on promising careers. The day is divided into three concerts, beginning at noon, 2:30, and 5 (the last one comprising the C-Major Quintet). (Weill Recital Hall.)

Charles Rosen—The pianist performs and speaks about the structures of Romantic music. (Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center. May 5 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 875-5050.)

Aaron Rosand—The distinguished violinist, who hasn't played a solo recital in New York since 1970, returns to perform Bach's D-Minor Partita and, with pianist Hugh J. Sung, Handel's G-Minor Sonata (No. 2), Bruch's "Scottish Fantasy," and works by Stravinsky and Jenö Hubay. (Carnegie Hall. May 5 at 8.)

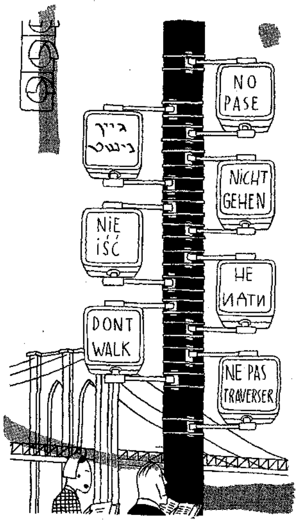
Margaret Leng-Tan—The avant-garde pianist (whose performances of toy-piano compositions fill a spanking-new CD on the Point Music label) performs on a full-sized instrument in this recital of Cage's complete Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano. (Roulette, 228 West Broadway. 219-8242. May 6-7 at 9.)

BABEL ON THE HUDSON

Ever since Peter Stuyvesant landed on these shores, New York has been abustle with Europeans speaking their native tongues. But, outside of embassy functions, formal classes, and Dean & Deluca, where can people practice their languages these days? A few suggestions follow.

C'est Cheese—The number of French-speaking customers who pass through Murray's Cheese Shop, in Greenwich Village (257 Bleecker St., at Cornelia St.; 243-3289), is astonishing. According to Christophe Nayel, the affable young man from Brittany who patiently guides shoppers through the intimidating selection (about three hundred varieties), it boils down to this: since France and cheese are all but synonymous, Murray's is a natural crossroads for American Francophiles and French tourists. In quiet moments Nayel is delighted to discuss almost anything; a favorite topic is whether there are any pop bands looking for a singer from Brittany who works days in a cheese shop. But when Nayel explains the fine points of the brielike L'Édel de Cléron or conspiratorially clues you in to the rarity of the strictly seasonal Vacherin Mont d'Or, you know that this is the place to perfect your alimentary French.

Dom Sweet Dom—If you call the eighty-three-year-old Polish National Home (261 Driggs Ave., Greenpoint; 718-387-5252) and you don't speak Polish, you'll have to wait for the manager's English-speaking son to pick up the phone. But if you're interested in things Polish it's worth the trouble. The three-story building houses a tavern, a grand ballroom, and meeting halls that are home to more than a dozen Polish-speaking organizations—engineering, bridge, table tennis. Or you can head straight for the tavern, where Warsaw native Jolanta Urbanska, who tends bar, can deepen your knowledge of the culture with her tremendous stock of impure jokes, some of them Cold War classics. (Why wouldn't stamps with Stalin on them stick to envelopes? Because people spit on the wrong side.)



Diplomatic Plates—Finding a Spanish speaker is easy, but how about a *Spanish* Spanish speaker? Most weekends during soccer season, the projection-screen TV in the big hall at the Casa Galicia (37-09 31st St., Astoria; 718-932-1114) is tuned to Galician soccer. Card tables fill with noticeably European men (trim, medium-tall, few comb-overs), their somewhat less sports-oriented wives, and their well-behaved children. As the matches progress, the tables become cluttered with wine glasses and plates of octopus, fried sardines, chorizo; the children vanish. The club (which also offers lessons in folk dancing, flamenco, English, and Galician) is for members only, but the sergeant at arms is a friendly sort, and the technical Spanish—*¡Penalty! ¡Off-sides! ¡Gol!*—is not difficult to master.

Baby Grand Masters—Russian kids endure chess lessons the way most children do piano lessons, but the long hours pay off: New York's two premier chess clubs, the Marshall (23 W. 10th St.; 477-3716) and the Manhattan (353 W. 46th St.; 333-5888), draw their top tiers largely from the ranks of Russian émigrés. The clubs are long-standing and somewhat bitter rivals, though their competitiveness may be rendered moot by the fact that the best players tend to belong to both. The differences are largely aesthetic. The Marshall's Kremlin-yellow rooms, cracked windowpanes, and lovely back garden give it an old-fogyish, Old World charm. The Manhattan, by contrast, boasts a distinctly Slavic mix of the martial (strategy charts, etc.) and the sexy. It is a place of deep, meaningful silences, punctuated by the occasional Russian bon mot or blasphemy—more often the latter: in Russian, the words for "checkmate" and "obscenity" are one and the same.

Teutonic Links—Bags marked "Em-Eukal Hustenbonbons" (cough drops) and boxes reading "Semmel-Knödel in Kochbeuteln" (bread dumplings in boiling pouches) quietly jockey for shelf space with a myriad of other equally vocabulary-enhancing imported products at Schaller & Weber (1654 Second Ave., at 86th St.; 879-3047), a brightly lit and popular sixty-year-old butcher shop. Scurrying about in white coats and neckties, weighing cuts of beef, rustling wax paper, and talking to one another, and to many of their customers, in German are Ludwig Manz, Peter Bruggen, Karl Soller, and a handful of other friendly, middle-aged butchers of similar provenance: they, too, are German-made.

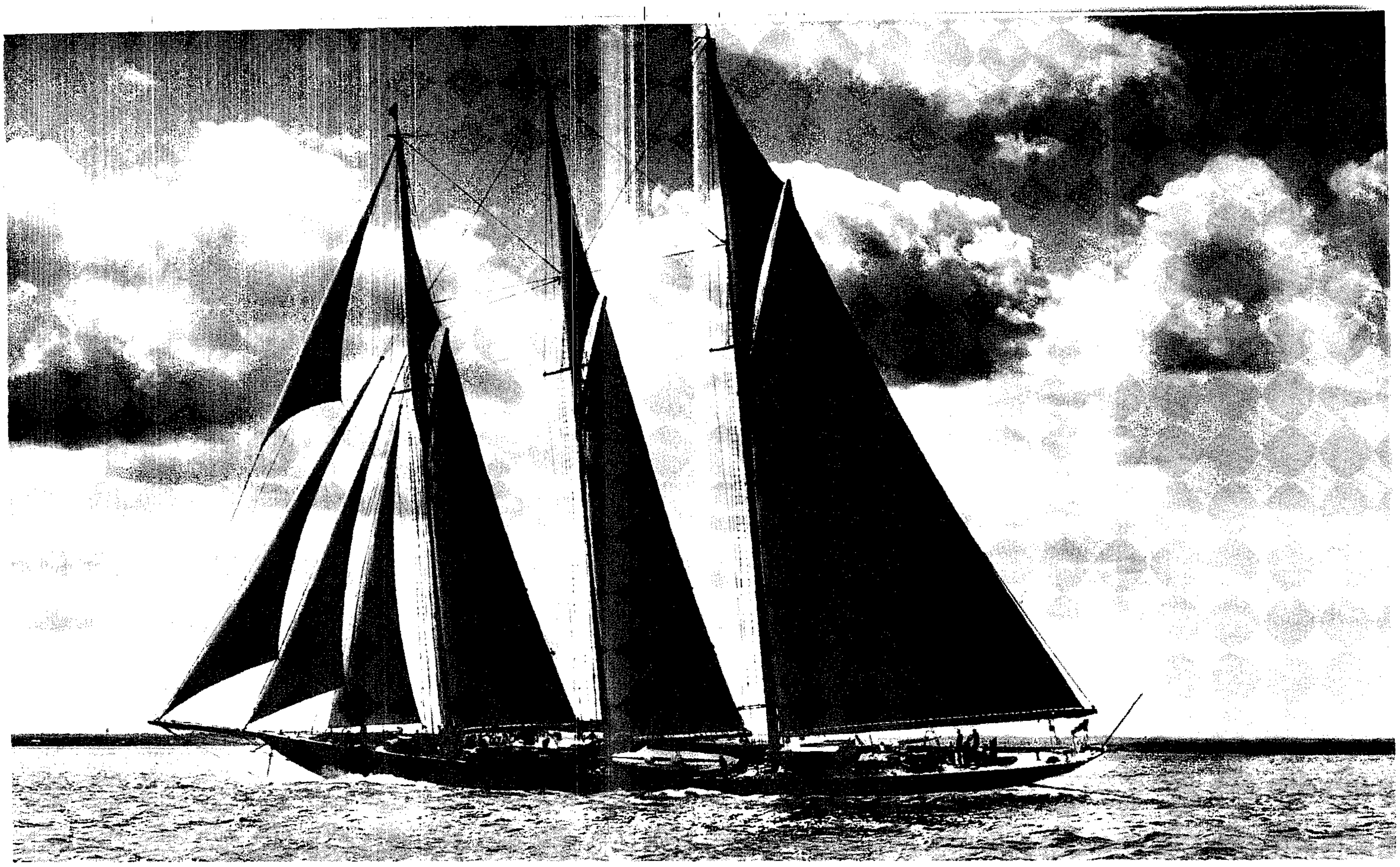
What's Appetizing?—For many New Yorkers, the vitality of Yiddish culture can be measured by the availability of tongue sandwiches. At a corner deli on Main Street and Jewell Avenue, in the Queens neighborhood of Kew Garden Hills, a patron noshing on a pita falafel recommended a place called Traditions—which, he promptly recalled, had closed. Perhaps they stocked tongue at Brach's Glatt Kosher Supermarket (72-51 Main St.), but the checkout lines were so crammed with dapper pensioners schmoozing in a combination of English and the mama loshen that it seemed better to try Wasserman's ("full line of appetizing"), across the street. There, amid shelves stocked with egg *kichel* and piña-colada macaroons, the proprietor and a customer were debating the value of chopped versus ground walnuts. Noticing the curious looks on the faces of the newcomers, he inquired about the extent of their Yiddish, and he seemed pleased with their answer. "A bisl iz genuk," he said—a little is enough.

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Bike New York—Twenty years ago, a couple of hundred dedicated cyclists turned up for a thirty-six-mile tour of the five boroughs ending with a party on Staten Island. By last year, the route had stretched to forty-two miles, and twenty-eight thousand bikers pedalled their way from Battery Park City to Fort Wadsworth. On May 4 at 8 a.m., come rain or shine, you too can join the pack. For more information, call 932-2453.

More Windows on the World—Albanian folk singing, Ukrainian mountain-village music, and Filipino dancing are among the activities at the twenty-second annual Folk Parks Festi-

LAURENT CILLUFFO



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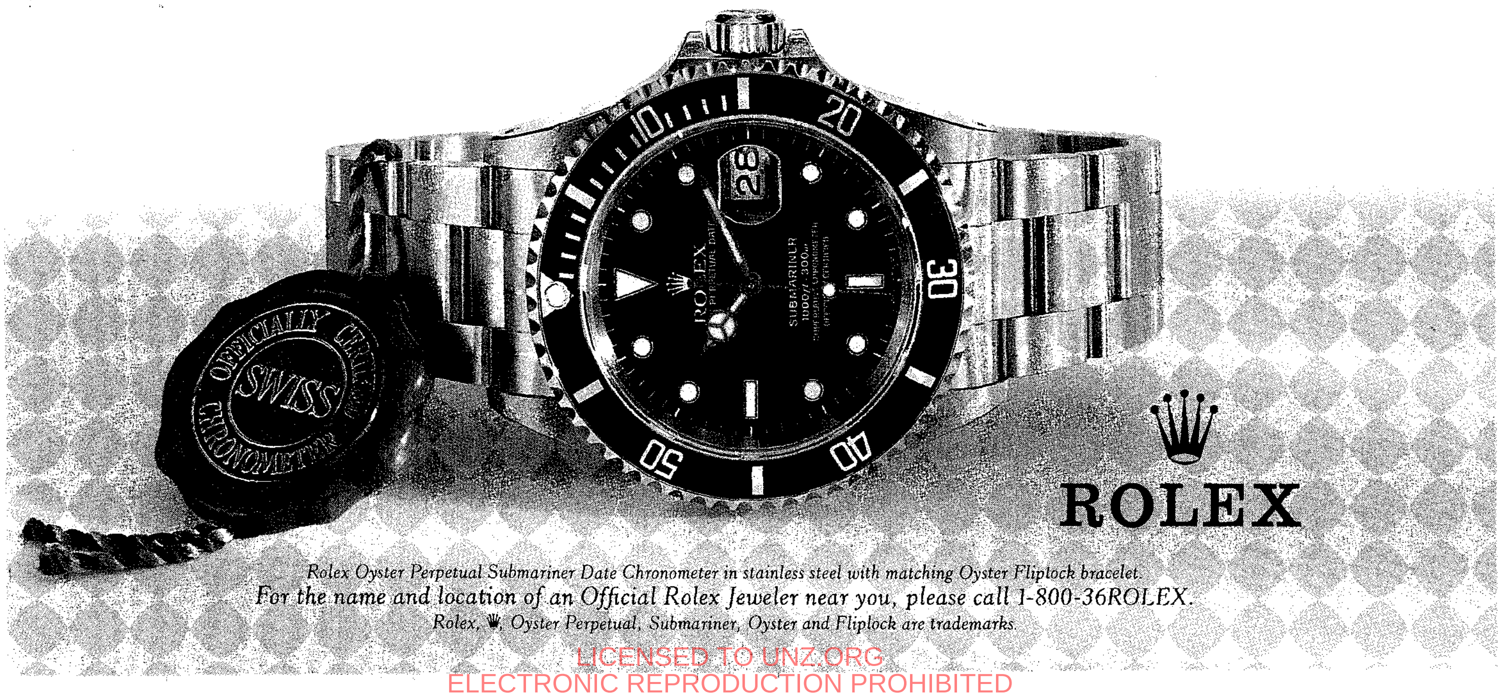

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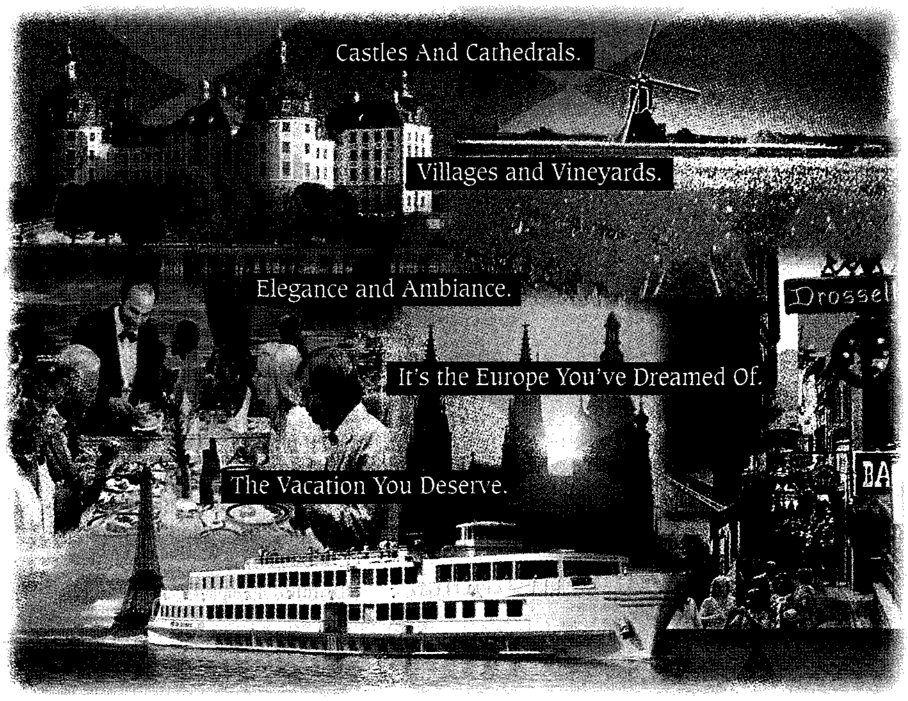

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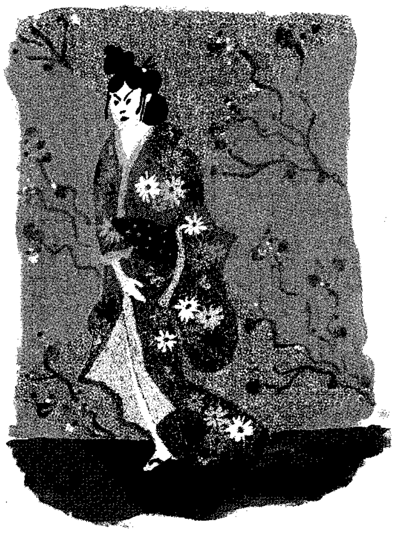
val, which this year will help celebrate the reopening of the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, after an extensive renovation, at the New York Botanical Garden. (Bronx Park. May 4, from 11:30 to 7. For more information, call 212-691-9510.)

Rites of Spring—The Brooklyn Botanic Garden's annual Cherry Blossom Festival, with haiku readings and bamboo-flute concerts, not to mention oodles of pink and white petals, takes place May 3-4, from 10 to 6. (Washington Ave. at Eastern Parkway. 718-622-4433.)

Fast Learners—Fanatic Pynchonites are welcome at the Open-Mike Thomas Pynchon Imitator Contest. Why is it happening? "Because of Pynchon's lack of public presence," explains the organizer and host, novelist Melvin Jules Bukiet. (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St., April 27 at 7; contestants sign up at 6:45.)

Readings—April 23 at 7:30: Poets Daniel Halpern, Robert Hass, Erica Jong, Mark Strand, and James Tate read their work. (Barnes & Noble, 33 E. 17th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ April 28 at 7:30: David Lehman and Star Black read their poetry. (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ May 1 at 7: Susan Thomsen, Joan Larkin, Carolyn Ferrell, and others read from their contributions to "Girls: An Anthology." (Exit Art, 548 Broadway. Tickets at the door.) . . . ¶ May 5 at 7: Poet and critic Seamus Deane offers passages from his first novel, "Reading in the Dark." (Glucksman Ireland House, New York University, 1 Washington Mews. Tickets at the door.) . . . ¶ May 6 at 6:30: Author Gita Mehta reads from "Snakes and Ladders," her account of contemporary India. (Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St. 517-2742.)



The Cherry Blossom Festival, at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden.

ELIZA GRAN

Talks—April 23 at 7: Cartoonists Jules Feiffer and Art Spiegelman talk with their pioneering colleague Will Eisner about his sixty years in the field. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. Tickets at the door.) . . . ¶ April 24 at 6:30: Filmmaker and sometime curator Peter Greenaway discusses choosing art for exhibition. (New York Academy of Art, 111 Franklin St., between West Broadway and Church St. Tickets at the door.) . . . ¶ April 24 at 7: Writer Brendan Gill joins former Ziegfeld Girl Eleanor Dana O'Connell and former patrolman Ed Skelly to reminisce about Prohibition. (New-York Historical Society, 2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W. Tickets at the door.) . . . ¶ May 6 at 6:30: Journalist and political scientist Rochelle G. Saidel discusses the Holocaust museum in Battery Park City, which is scheduled to open later this year. (Hebrew Union College, 1 W. 4th St. No tickets necessary.)

Walk—April 26 at 1: Writer and Brooklynite Cezar Del Valle leads a tour of the lost theatres of Park Slope, where in the early part of the century there were some thirty playhouses. For more information, call 718-788-8549.

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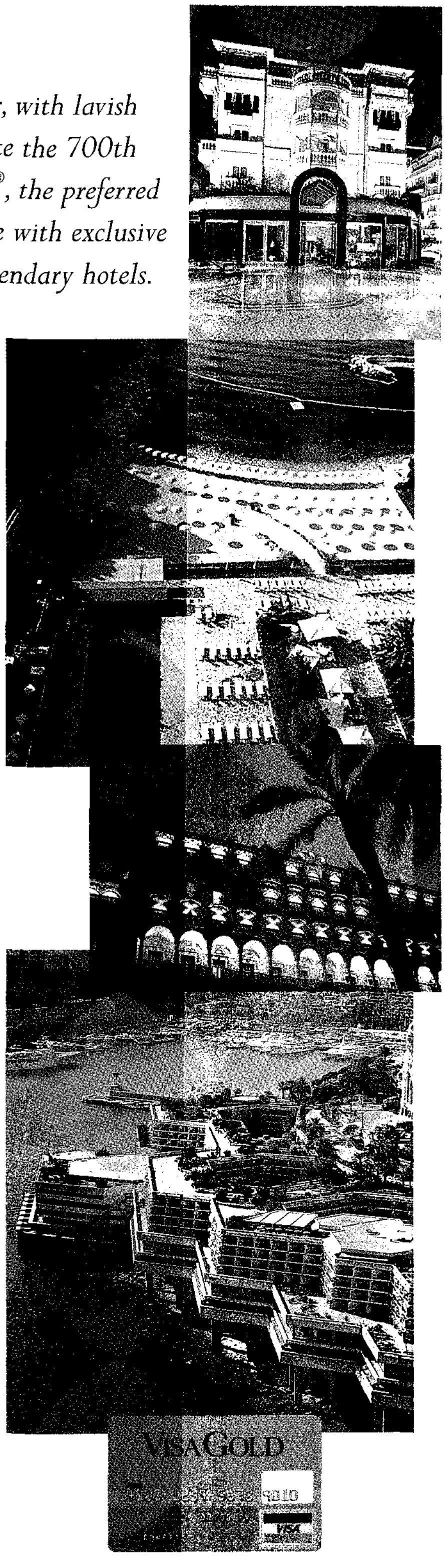

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THE MOVIES

FILMS OPENING

All Over Me—A drama about the friendship of two Hell's Kitchen teen-agers (Alison Folland and Tara Subkoff). Directed by Alex Sichel, from a screenplay by her sister Sylvia. Opening April 25. (Angelika Film Center.)

Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery—Mike Myers plays both the title character, a mod undercover agent, and his nemesis, Dr. Evil, who awaken from a cryogenic sleep after thirty years. Directed by Jay Roach, from Myers's script. Opening May 2.

Breakdown—A thriller about a couple on a road trip (Kurt Russell and Kathleen Quinlan) who accept help from a friendly stranger (J. T. Walsh). Directed by Jonathan Mostow, who co-wrote the script with Sam Montgomery. Opening May 2.

Broken English—New Zealand is the setting for a love story involving a young man and woman from very different backgrounds. With Aleksandra Vujcic, Julian Arahanga, and Rade Serbedzija. Directed by Gregor Nicholas. Opening May 2. (Angelika Film Center.)

A Brother's Kiss—Writer-director Seth Zvi Rosenfeld's début feature, based on his one-act play about brothers (Nick Chinlund and Michael Raynor) on opposite sides of the law. Opening April 25. (Sutton and Village East Cinemas.)

A Chef in Love—The tale of a French gourmet in Soviet Georgia in the twenties. With Pierre Richard and Nino Kirtadze. Directed by Nana Djordjadze. In French, Georgian, and Russian. Opening April 25. (Carnegie Hall Cinemas and Quad Cinema.)

Children of the Revolution—Writer-director Peter Duncan's comedy, about an Australia facing civil war in 1989, stars Judy Davis, Richard Roxburgh, F. Murray Abraham, Geoffrey Rush, and Sam Neill. Opening May 1.

Commandments—A dark comedy in which Aidan Quinn plays a man who, believing himself abandoned by God, sets out to break all of the Ten Commandments. Also with Courteney Cox and Anthony LaPaglia. Written and directed by Daniel Taplitz. Opening May 2.

The Designated Mourner—Mike Nichols, Miranda Richardson, and David de Keyser talk their way through David Hare's film version of Wallace Shawn's discursive, apocalyptic play. Opening May 2. (68th St. Playhouse.)

Diary of a Seducer—The Kierkegaard novel of the same name functions as an aphrodisiac for two Parisian students (Chiara Mastroianni and Melvil Poupaud), in a movie written and directed by Daniele Dubroux. In French. Opening May 2. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Female Perversions—Director Susan Streitfeld's story (co-written with Julie Hebert) of a woman's struggle to reconcile the person she thinks she is with the person others think she should be. With Tilda Swinton, Amy Madigan, Karen Sillas, and Frances Fisher. Opening April 25. (Quad Cinema.)

Flamenco—A performance documentary by director Carlos Saura and cinematographer Vittorio Storaro. Opening April 25. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Irma Vep—A satiric take on the state of French filmmaking, in which an aging New Wave director (Jean-Pierre Léaud) is remaking Feuillade's "Les Vampires" with the Hong Kong actress Maggie Cheung (who plays herself). In French and English. Opening April 30. (Film Forum.)

Nothing Personal—Violence and the Troubles in 1975 Belfast. With James Frain, John Lynch, Michael Gambon, and Ian Hart. Directed by Thaddeus O'Sullivan. Daniel Momin adapted the screenplay from his novel "All Our Fault." Opening April 25. (Village East Cinemas.)

Ripe—A drama written and directed by Mo Ogrodnik, in which recently orphaned fifteen-year-old twins (Daisy Eagan and Monica Keena) vow not to let anything come between them. Opening May 2.

Romy and Michele's High School Reunion—A couple of Southern Californians (Mira Sorvino and Lisa Kudrow) set out to impress their former classmates, not altogether honestly, ten years after graduation. Also with Janeane Garofalo. Written by Robin Schiff. Directed by David Mirkin. Opening April 25. (Embassy 1.)

Shiloh—Writer-director Dale Rosenbloom's adaptation of Phyllis Reynolds Naylor's children's book, about a boy and his love for a dog. Starring Michael Moriarty, Rod Steiger, and Blake Heron. Opening April 25. (Cinema 3rd Avenue and Village East Cinemas.)

Truth or Consequences, N.M.—Kiefer Sutherland directed and stars in a tale of a robbery gone wrong. Also with Vincent Gallo, Kim Dickens, Mykelti Williamson, and Kevin Pollak. Opening May 2.

Volcano—There's one about to erupt in the La Brea Tar Pits, in an action movie directed by Mick Jackson and starring Tommy Lee Jones. Opening April 25.

Warriors of Virtue—The adventures of a teenager (Mario Yedidia) transported to the fantasyland of Tao to help defeat a wicked warlord. Directed by Ronny Yu. Opening May 2. (Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, and Waverly.)

CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Bruce Diones, Sarah Kerr, Anthony Lane, and Terrence Rafferty. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre information is listed on page 48.)

Anaconda—In Luis Llosa's large-deadly-animal movie, the usual ensemble of potential victims chugs down the Amazon in search of a lost tribe and instead winds up doing battle with several animatronic specimens of the title reptile: a gigantic and very mean constrictor that one character describes, admiringly, as "the perfect killing machine." Llosa's approach to scaring the daylights out of the audience has, like the killing machine itself, the brutal efficiency of single-mindedness. The film doesn't bother much with exposition or characterization—it's almost comically impatient to get to the gruesome stuff—and the whole thing is

"Powerful...In all respects, *Mason's Retreat* is exemplary."
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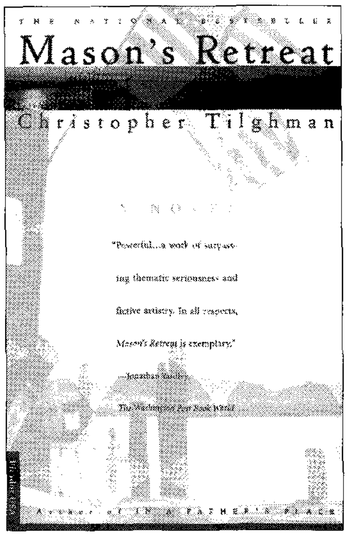

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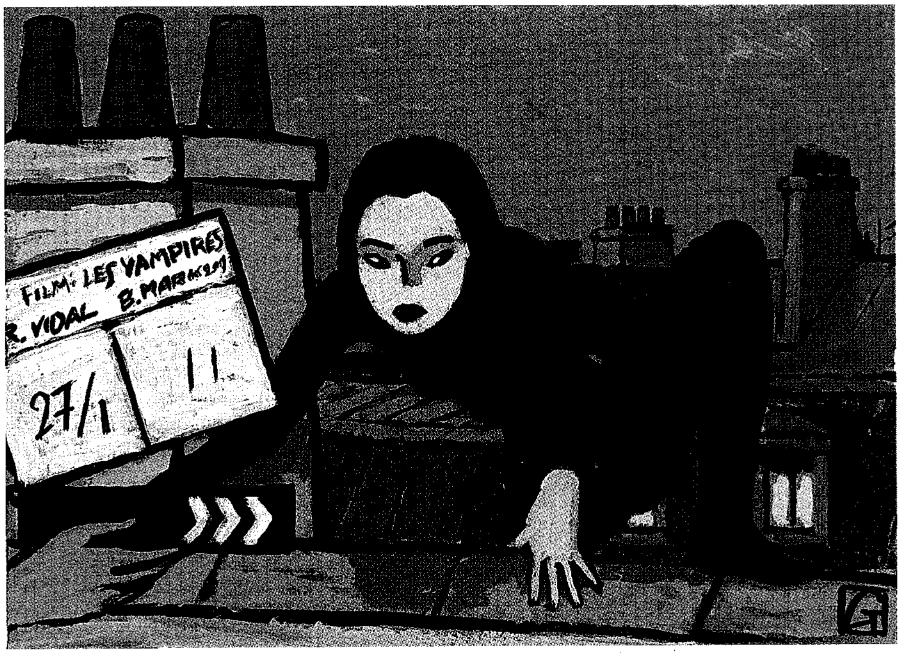
over in an economical ninety minutes. Although it's refreshing to see an action movie that doesn't pretend to be something it isn't, this frankness has a downside, because what the picture so unapologetically *is* isn't, in fact, much. With Jon Voight, Jennifer Lopez, Eric Stoltz, and Ice Cube.—T.R. (4/21/97) (Astor Plaza, 84th Street Sixplex, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.)

Anna Karenina—Bernard Rose's faithful adaptation of the Tolstoy novel trots out plenty of clichés but has a few things going for it, too. It looks both beautiful and convincing. And it tells the story from the point of view of Levin (Alfred Molina), the melancholy, philosophical friend of Anna's brother. Sean Bean, as Vronsky, makes a good, strapping, intermittently sensitive macho. And Sophie Marceau's focussed, reflective performance as Anna single-handedly carries the film through its hackneyed patches. She makes passion subtle.—S.K. (Angelika Film Center and Paris.)



Opening April 30, Maggie Cheung in "Irma Vep."

JEAN-CLAUDE GÖTTING

Chasing Amy—In Kevin Smith's low-budget comedy, a young comic-book artist (Ben Affleck) falls in love with a pretty, vivacious blonde (Joey Lauren Adams), who is, inconveniently, a lesbian. Smith doesn't have the skill to maintain a pleasurable sense of anticipation for an entire movie; this picture, his third, is as crummy-looking and as sluggishly paced as his début feature, the 1994 "Clerks."—T.R. (4/7/97) (Angelika Film Center, Cinema II, Embassy 4, and Lincoln Square.)

The Daytrippers—A Long Island schoolteacher (Hope Davis) suspects her husband (Stanley Tucci) of infidelity, and confesses her fears to her parents (Anne Meara and Pat McNamara), her sister (Parker Posey), and her sister's boyfriend (Liev Schreiber). The whole group then piles into the car and heads for Manhattan, hoping to pick up the elusive husband's scent. This low-budget début feature by the writer and director Greg Mottola is no big deal, but it has a terrific ensemble, and Mottola's affection for the characters is obvious.—T.R. (3/24/97) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

The Devil's Own—The hero of Alan J. Pakula's resolutely unsuspenseful new movie is a middle-aged New York City cop (Harrison Ford) who, out of the goodness of his Irish-American heart, takes in a shy, taciturn young immigrant (Brad Pitt) and then discovers that his polite lodger is in fact an I.R.A. terrorist. This is a star vehicle, but both stars shed dim light here, as if they were coming to us from a galaxy far, far away.—T.R. (4/7/97) (Chelsea Cinemas, Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, 64th & 2nd, and Village Theatre VII.)

Double Team—As he did with Ringo Lam on last year's under-appreciated "Maximum Risk," Jean-Claude Van Damme teams up with a Hong Kong director, this time Tsui Hark, and delivers a great action flick. And his co-star, Dennis Rodman, makes a likable movie début as an arms dealer with the fashion sense of an Audrey Hepburn on acid. The story involves the usual international-terrorism organizations and the wife-in-harm's-way plotting, but there's a nifty twist halfway through, when Van Damme is "retired" to an island of spies straight out of the sixties TV classic "The Prisoner." Hark stages a clever escape that allows Van Damme and Rodman to face off against the leading world terrorist, a beautifully chiselled, truly menacing Mickey Rourke. (He's just a pair of cloven hoofs away from being a satyr from hell.) At times the film spills deliriously over the top, and it pays little attention to narrative continuity, but that hardly matters. Hark unleashes some hilarious product-placement mayhem having to do with exploding Coke machines—anything goes for that spectacular shot, and he's got a million of 'em.—B.D. (Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, First & 62nd Cinemas, Metro Cinema, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village East Cinemas.)

The English Patient—Written and directed by Anthony Minghella, from the novel by Michael Ondaatje, this long and searching movie tangles together a number of stories and characters: Almásy (Ralph Fiennes) and Katharine (Kristin Scott Thomas), who have an affair in North Africa before the Second World War; a French-Canadian nurse (Juliette Binoche) who cares for the badly burned Almásy after the war, and the Sikh soldier (Naveen Andrews) *she* has an affair with; and the mysterious Caravaggio (Willem Dafoe), a scavenging thief who appears to know the secrets of Almásy's past. The triumph of the film lies not just in the force and range of the performances but in Minghella's creation of an intimate epic: vast landscapes mingle with the minute details of desire, and the combination is transfixing.—A.L. (11/25/96) (Chelsea Cinemas, Embassy 3, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, New York Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

Grosse Pointe Blank—The screenplay, by Tom Jankiewicz, D. V. DeVincentis, Steve Pink, and John Cusack, has a high-concept premise: professional hit man goes home to attend his tenth high-school reunion. Cusack plays the

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contract killer, and the picture is directed by George Armitage, who demonstrated an unmistakable flair for homicidal slapstick in "Miami Blues" (1990). Both the star and the director appear to have the sense to play the outrageous material straight, and the opening half hour consists of a series of terrific revue-type sketches; the killer's session with his very reluctant psychiatrist (Alan Arkin) is a classic routine. But gradually the film's poker-faced manner begins to lose its novelty, because the hit man's casual, businesslike attitude toward his work is too thin a joke to sustain a feature-length movie. The picture stalls, and then starts to coast downhill, apparently unaware that the motor has stopped running. Also with Minnie Driver, Dan Aykroyd, Joan Cusack, Jeremy Piven, and Hank Azaria.—T.R. (4/21/97) (Cinema I, 84th Street Sixplex, 86th Street East Twin, Guild, 19th Street East 6, and Village Theatre VII.)

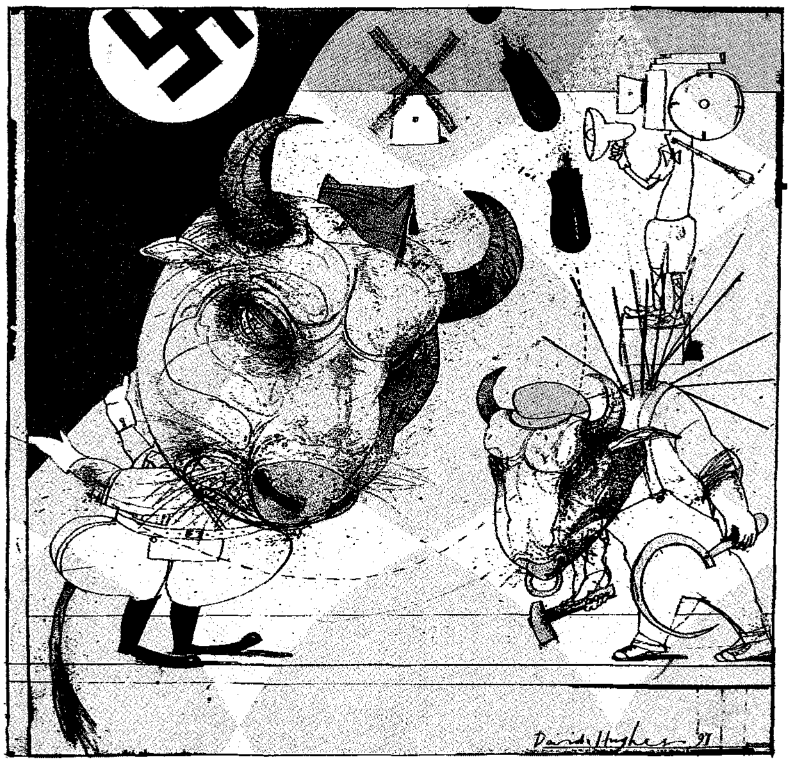
Inventing the Abbotts—Sue Miller's short story, on which Pat O'Connor's quietly directed film is based, is about two working-class brothers in the fifties and their crushes on the rich Abbott sisters. The story deals with the dreams and fantasies that romance brings to young lives, but O'Connor is much more literal-minded: he dresses up the Abbotts in a life too good to be true—they're perfect, like the family in "Meet Me in St. Louis" (except they have sex). The movie sets up minor crises for the characters, but there's not a lot of tension here between rich and poor, just a lot of yearning closeups. Though the director lays out a nice nostalgic table, there's little to feast on beyond the spun-sugar beauty of his cast, which includes Jennifer Connelly, Liv Tyler, Joanna Going, Billy Crudup, and Joaquin Phoenix.—B.D. (Chelsea Cinemas, Gotham Cinema, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, State, and Village East Cinemas.)

Kolya—A likable enough Czech reworking of a tried-and-true formula: a sort of "Kramer vs. Kramer" set in Prague, in 1988-89, at the dawn of the Velvet Revolution. The screenwriter, Zdenek Sverak, also plays the central character, a bachelor cellist who suddenly finds himself responsible for an adorable Russian five-year-old. The cellist slowly grows out of his selfishness, and his love for this child who doesn't speak his language points to the new, boundaryless world that's about to open up. Directed by Jan Sverak. In Czech.—S.K. (First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, and Village East Cinemas.)

Liar Liar—Tom Shadyac's movie stars Jim Carrey as a lying lawyer whose life is upended when his five-year-old son makes a birthday wish that, for exactly one day, his father will be incapable of telling a lie. As he peels away the layers of venal charm, you wait to discover an even more pungent venality beneath. Instead—guess what—he turns out to be a nice guy, and you feel let down when he finally surrenders to the forces of mush. But it's touching to find a director who believes in all sincerity that jokes about gas and pimples are, and always will be, inherently funny.—A.L. (3/31/97) (Chelsea West, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, National Twin, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 34th Street Showplace, and Waverly.)

Paradise Road—Bruce Beresford wrote and directed this stirring but rather stiff tale of women imprisoned by the Japanese in the Second World War. Beresford is good on the surreal encounter of disaster and politesse: three well-bred women swim to shore from an abandoned ship, stagger through a swamp, and only then introduce themselves, like shy débutantes at a dance. The picture, set mostly in Sumatra, conveys both the horror of the experience and the women's stoicism; as with most prison movies, what you don't get is the sheer sense of time dragging by. Redemption, such as it is, comes from a choir that the prisoners create, which performs scores written down from memory. (All of this, apparently, is drawn from life, and the scores still exist.) The cast, like the prisoners, is an international roundup: Glenn Close, Julianna Margulies, Frances McDormand, Pauline Collins, Jennifer Ehle, Joanna Ter Steege, and Cate Blanchette. You never quite forget what a strict genre the movie belongs to; it can be heartbreaking, but once it's over your heart mends with surprising speed.—A.L. (4/14/97) (Beekman, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

The Saint—The history of "The Saint" is one of steady, unspectacular decline, from the original Leslie Charteris novels in the twenties to the countless Hollywood adaptations (the best of them starring George Sanders, circa 1940) to the sixties TV series with Roger Moore and, finally, to this splendidly misconceived Phillip Noyce movie. Even the gadgetry is second-rate. Val Kilmer, in the leading role, is fine at negotiating all the camp costume changes, but he can hardly be said to fade into the background, and he remains more weird than suave. As for Elisabeth Shue, she is far too worried and wounded—too serious an actress, in a way—to look as if she might enjoy this nonsense. And what undiluted nonsense it is: Shue plays a cold-fusion scientist whose expertise, compounded by the Saint's courage, may yet save Russia from the evil designs of a Mafia tyrant (Rade Serbedzija). No one has the guts to play it for the laughs that the movie needs; you can feel the agony as the half-jokes die in the air.—A.L. (4/14/97) (Art Greenwich Twin, East 85th Street, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Olympia, State, and 34th Street Showplace.)



April 25 through May 3, at the Walter Reade Theatre, films commemorating the start of the Spanish Civil War, sixty years ago.

DAVID HUGHES

Sling Blade—Billy Bob Thornton wrote and directed this dunderheaded film, in which he plays a simpleton who, released from an asylum for the criminally insane after serving twenty-five years for the murder of his mother and her lover, returns to his poor Southern home town and ends up befriending a small boy and defending him against *his* mom's abusive boyfriend. Although the film does have two terrific actors—Dwight Yoakam, as the menacing boyfriend, and John Ritter, as a gay store manager—its critical success is mystifying; it's hard to believe that anybody could fall for its dim homilies.—B.D. (Angelika Film Center, Carnegie Hall Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, 86th Street East Twin, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Murray Hill Cinemas.)

That Old Feeling—Bette Midler and Dennis Farina play off each other well as an older divorced couple who rekindle their romance at their daughter's wedding. The screenplay, by Leslie Dixon, tries hard to recapture the spirit of screwball, but all the trashy talk and the nineties jabs at cosmetic surgery and Rogaine are pretty pedestrian. Farina brings some low-key fun to his lines (as he did in "Get Shorty"), but this is one of Midler's few not-so-great performances. She seems over-wound, strident; instead of enlivening the familiar proceedings, she appears to be pushing everyone out of her way. The film's real surprise is in the performances of two of its co-stars, Paula Marshall, as the daughter, and Danny Nucci, as the hunky paparazzo she falls for at her own wedding. Their sweetness turns cynical jibes into charming banter, and they steer the film to its predictable conclusion as innocently as if it had never been done before. Directed by Carl Reiner.—B.D. (Chelsea Cinemas, Coronet Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, National Twin, Orpheum VII, 34th St. East, and Waverly.)

Traveller—Bill Paxton plays an Irish con man in the contemporary rural South who takes young Mark Wahlberg under his wing and teaches him the tricks of his trade. Cinematographer and first-time director Jack Green doesn't race to the finish line; he gives his actors breathing room, and consequently the film develops the unforced, loping pace of a fine Western. Jim McGlynn's script refrains (wisely) from telegraphing the con before it's played, and its attitude toward the two main characters is provocatively conflicted—sometimes they take advantage of people who can't afford to be taken advantage of. These men recall the refreshing amorality of seventies movies: when Paxton meets a straight-arrow single-mom bartender (Julianna Margulies) and tries to fleece her, it's nice to see their chemistry erupt because she likes the con in him. The picture provides a tired motivation for the finale's big score (which seems a little brutal for the story that's preceded it), but Green has captured some fine performances and given his tale a cool, antiheroic zing.—B.D. (Eastside Playhouse, 84th Street Sixplex, and Village Theatre VII.)

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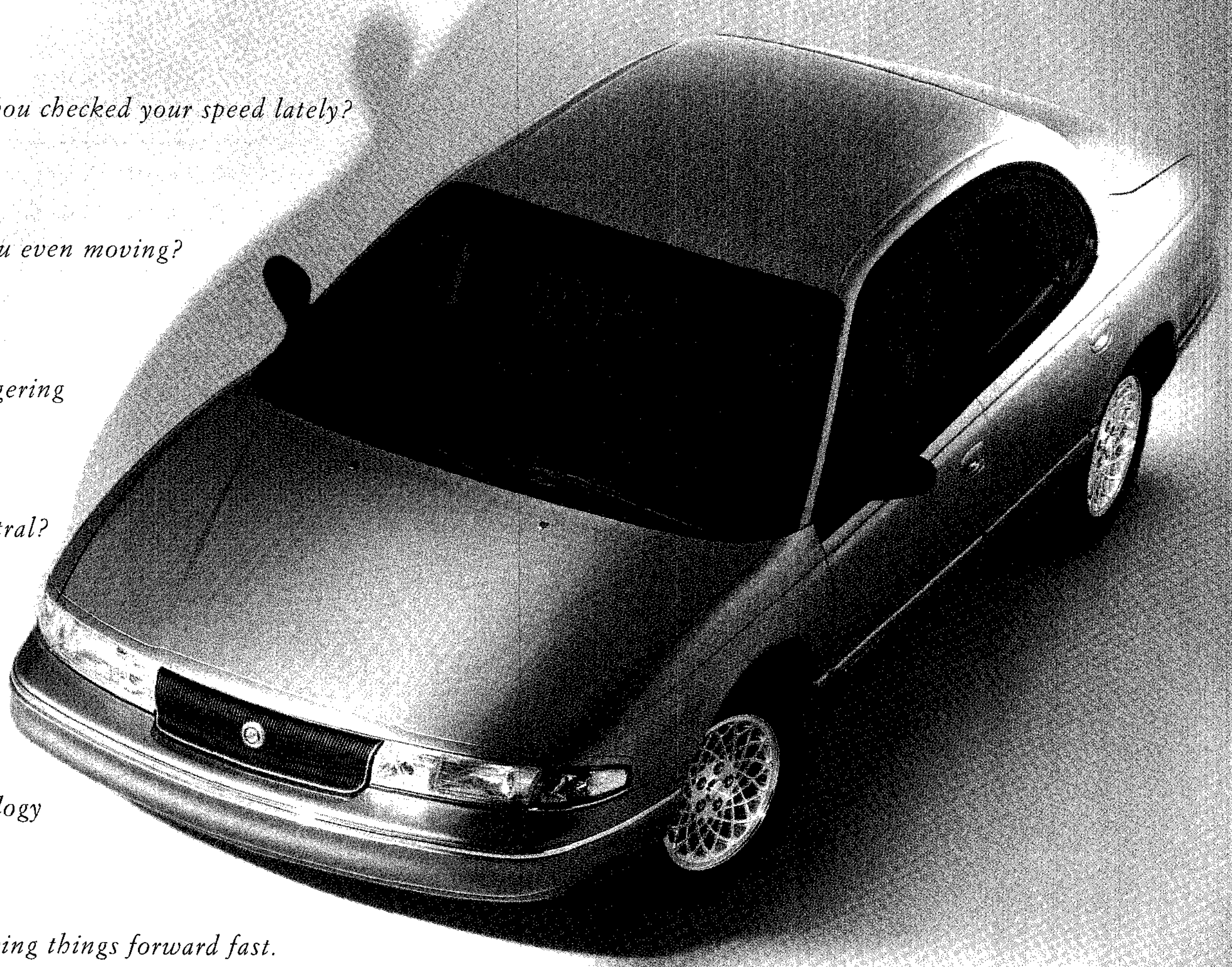

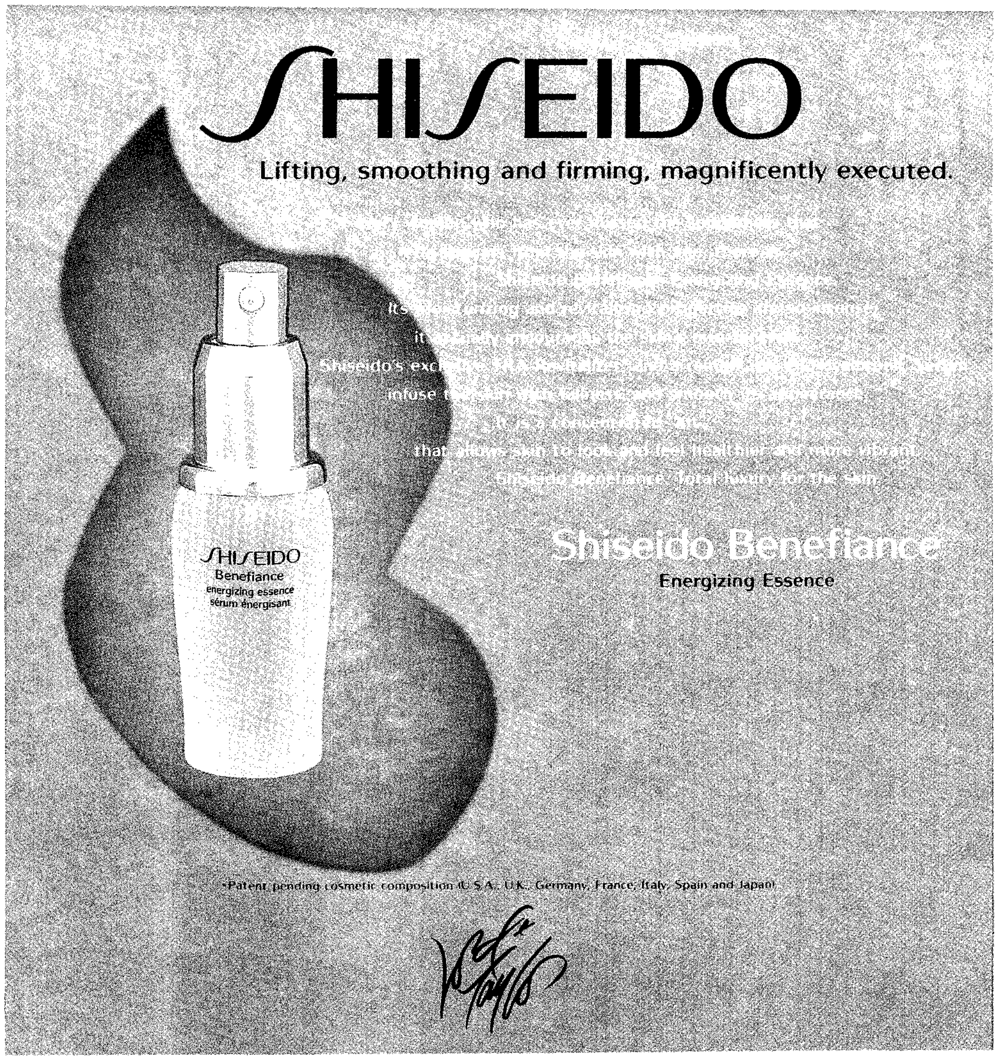
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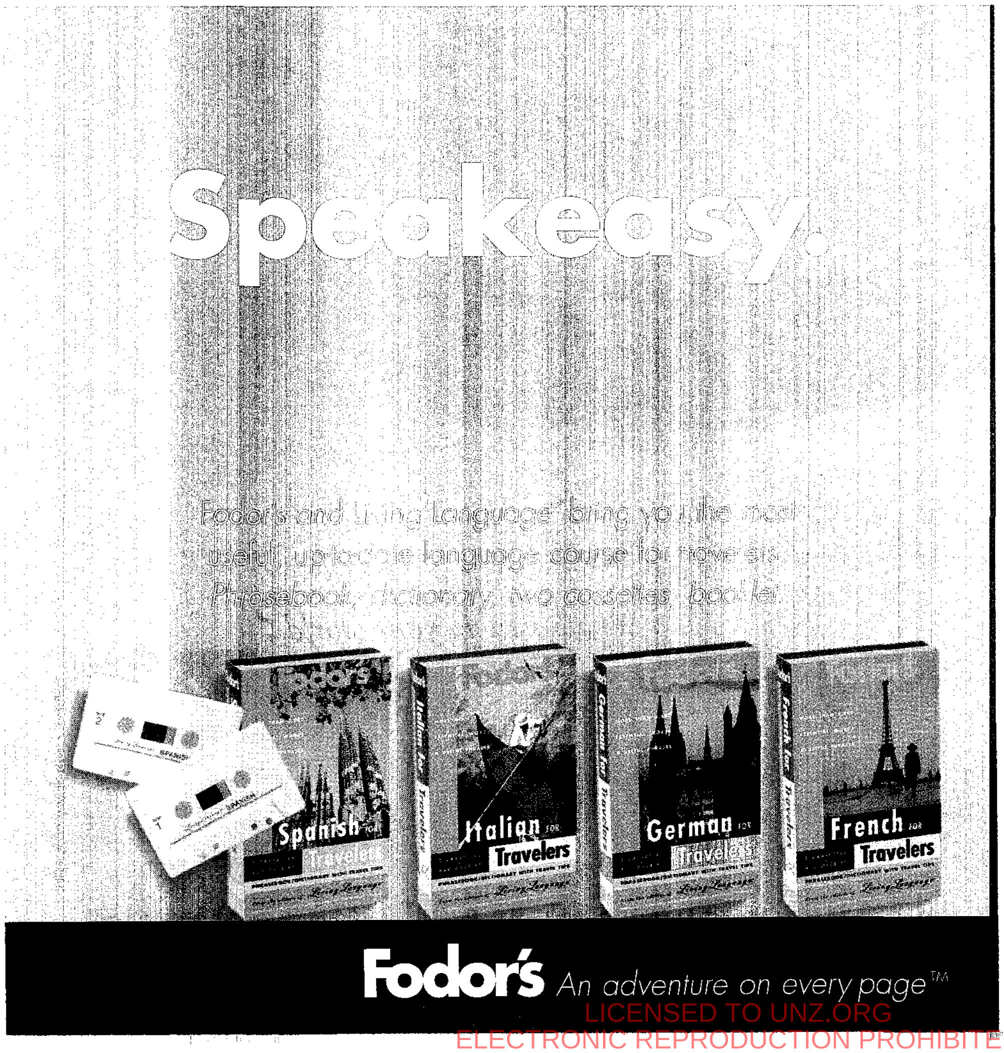
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ALSO PLAYING

BOYS LIFE 2: Quad Cinema. . . . **DONNIE BRASCO** (reviewed in our issue of 3/17/97): Criterion Center, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **EIGHT HEADS IN A DUFFEL BAG:** 84th Street Sixplex, Embassy 2, First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, 62nd & Broadway, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **MC HALE'S NAVY:** Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Manhattan Twin, National Twin, Orpheum VII, and 34th Street Showplace. . . . **MURDER AT 1600:** Chelsea Cinemas, Coronet Cinemas, Criterion Center, 84th Street Sixplex, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII. . . . **PINK FLAMINGOS:** Angelika Film Center. . . . **PRISONER OF THE MOUNTAINS:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **SECRETS & LIES:** 59th Street East Cinema, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Quad Cinema. . . . **SELENA:** Lincoln Square, Olympia, Orpheum VII, State, and Village East Cinemas. . . . **SMILLA'S SENSE OF SNOW** (3/10/97): Art Greenwich Twin and Manhattan Twin. . . . **WHEN WE WERE KINGS** (2/17/97): Carnegie Hall Cinemas and 19th Street East 6.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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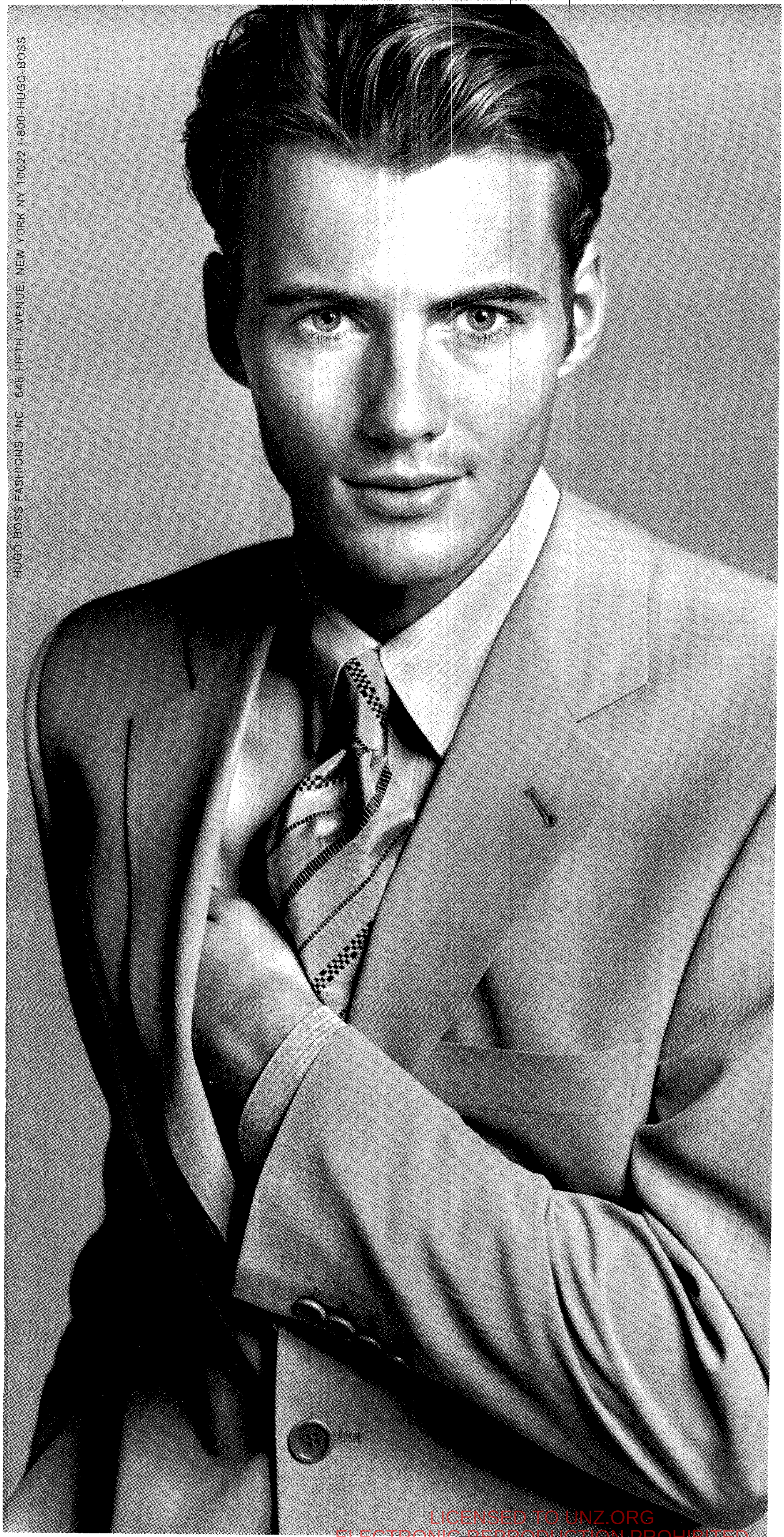
(For show times, call 777-FILM, except where noted.)

Angelika 57, 225 W. 57th St.
Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Carnegie Hall Cinemas, Seventh Ave. between 56th and 57th Sts.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St.
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Criterion Center, Broadway at 44th St.
East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
Eastside Playhouse, Third Ave. at 55th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
86th Street East Twin, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Embassy I, Broadway at 46th St.
Embassy 2, 3, and 4, Seventh Ave. at 47th St.
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Guild, 33 W. 50th St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Manhattan Twin, Third Ave. at 59th St.
Metro Cinema I and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
National Twin, Broadway at 44th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St.
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
Regency, Broadway at 67th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
68th St. Playhouse, Third Ave. at 68th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton I and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th St. East, 241 E. 34th St.
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Waverly I and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth Aves.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.



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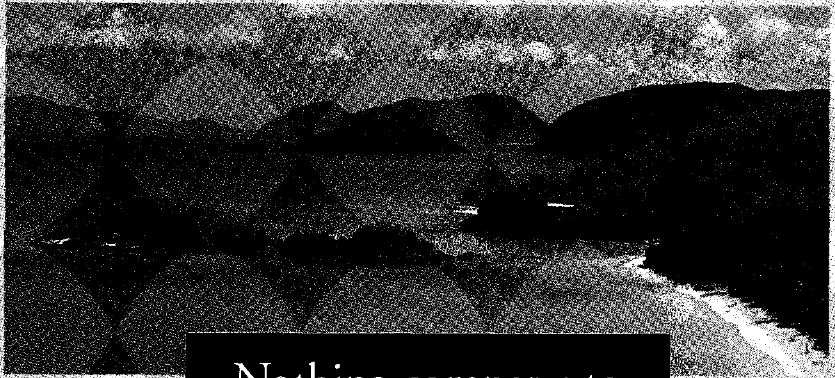

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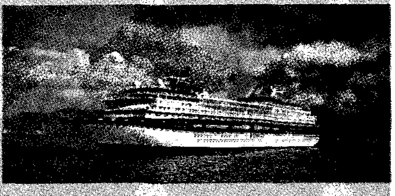

REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

American Madness (1932)—A topical melodrama of the Depression. It's about a run on a bank—and with a twist that is purest Hollywood. The big banker (Walter Huston) is the hero, and it's his lower-echelon employees who are the villains. Frank Capra directed—even this early in his career, he often underestimated the audience—and Robert Riskin wrote the script. With Pat O'Brien, Constance Cummings, Kay Johnson, and Gavin Gordon.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; May 6.)

Lolita (1962)—Wild, marvellously enjoyable comedy, adapted from Nabokov's novel. James Mason is the lover of little girls, the smiling, obsequious, phony Humbert Humbert; Shelley Winters is Charlotte Haze, the culture vulture rampant; Sue Lyon is her sexy daughter, Lolita; and Peter Sellers (at his most inspired) is Quilty, Humbert Humbert's walking paranoia. Stanley Kubrick directed.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; starting April 25.)

Las Madres: The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo (1985)—The Argentine women who picketed the Presidential Palace every Thursday beginning in the late seventies to protest the disappearances of their sons and daughters had no political program. Yet so passionately did they press their plea for justice that they raised the consciousness of their country and helped overthrow the military dictators. When the new civilian government declined to open the records of torture and execution, the mothers demonstrated against benign neglect as forcefully as they had against totalitarian coercion. Few films have captured the emotions of solidarity as acutely as does this documentary by Susana Muñoz and Lourdes Portillo. The filmmakers don't pin halos on their heroines; they simply let them speak, and the women's fierce nobility breaks your heart.—M.S. (Museum of Modern Art; May 2 and May 5.)

Near Dark (1987)—This vampire thriller, directed by Kathryn Bigelow, has a nocturnal, erotic atmosphere, shards of wit, and some better performances than are customary in the genre. The vampires are a gang of outlaws travelling by van, drifting around the country, hibernating in motels during the sunlight hours. Vampirism is reversible here, so the characters' fates aren't sealed, and this allows for curiosity about what will happen to the melancholy heroine, appealingly played by Jenny Wright. Bill Paxton, as the most rambunctious of the gang, has a biker's gusto that energizes his scenes. Jenette Goldstein makes an impact, too—she's the mom figure of the pack. The cast includes Lance Henriksen as the dad figure, Joshua Miller as the little brother, and Adrian Pasdar as the new inductee.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; April 25.)

LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through April 24: "Woman in the Dunes" (1964, Hiroshi Teshigahara; in Japanese). . . . From April 25: "Lolita" (†).

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Through May 20: In celebration of the centenary of the publication of Bram Stoker's "Dracula," the museum is showing forty of the vampire's many incarnations, including "Near Dark" (†), on April 25 at 8. . . . ¶ A program of films celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the distribution company Women Make Movies. April 24 at 3 and 6: "In Harm's Way" (1996, Jan Krawitz) and "A Healthy Baby Girl" (1996, Judith Helfand). . . . April 25 at 3 and May 4 at 5: "Healthcaring" (1976, Denise Bostrom and Jane Warrenbrand) and "In the Best Interest of the Children" (1977, Frances Reid, Elizabeth Stevens, and Cathy Zheutlin). . . . April 25 and April 29 at 6: "Daughter Rite" (1979, Michelle Citron) and "Thriller" (1979, Sally Potter). . . . April 25 at 8 and April 29 at 3: "But Then She's Betty

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Carter" (1980, Michelle Parkerson) and "Some American Feminists" (1980, Luce Guibeault, Nicole Brossard, and Margaret Wescott). . . . April 26 at 2:30 and April 27 at 5: "Reassemblage" (1982, Trinh T. Minh-ha) and "A Man When He Is a Man" (1982, Valeria Sarmiento). . . . April 26 at 5 and April 27 at 2:30: "Beneath the Skin" (1981, Cecelia Condit), "Adynata: Murder Is Not a Story" (1983, Leslie Thornton), and "Illusions" (1983, Julie Dash). . . . May 2 at 3: "Far from Poland" (1984, Jill Godmilow). . . . May 2 at 6: Four short films by Jane Campion. . . . May 2 at 8 and May 5 at 3: "Las Madres: The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo" (†). . . . May 3 at 2:30: "Navajo Talking Picture" (1986, Arleen Bowman) and "Ana Mendieta: Fuego de Tierra" (1987, Kate Horsfield). . . . May 3 at 5: "Consider Anything, Only Don't Cry" (1987, Helen DeMichiel), "Ten Cents a Dance" (1986, Midi Onodera), and "Joan Does Dynasty" (1986, Joan Braderman). . . . May 4 at 2:30: "Measures of Distance" (1988, Mona Hatoum), "From Here, From This Side" (1988, Gloria Ribe), and "Love, Women, and Flowers" (1988, Marta Rodriguez and Jorge Silva). . . . ¶ May 1 at 3 and 6: "The State of Farmers" (1996, Christian Isell), a documentary. . . . ¶ A series of films made between 1918 and 1949 with all African-American casts. May 1 at 7:45 and May 6 at 3: "Within Our Gates" (1920, Oscar Micheaux; silent). . . . May 2 at 2:30: "Double Deal" (1939, Arthur Dreifuss) and "Souls of Sin" (1949, Powell Lindsay). . . . May 2 at 6: "Two Gun Man from Harlem" (1938, Richard C. Kahn) and "Beware" (1946, Bud Pollard). . . . May 2 at 8:15: "Broken Strings" (1940, Bernard B. Ray) and "Moon Over Harlem" (1939, Edgar G. Ulmer). . . . May 3 at 2: "The Birth of a Race" (1918, John W. Noble; silent) and "Body and Soul" (1925, Micheaux; silent). . . . May 3 at 5: "Sepia Cinderella" (1947, Arthur Leonard) and "Hi-De-Ho" (1947, Josh Binney). . . . May 4 at 2: "The Scar of Shame" (1926, Frank Peregini; silent) and "Eleven P.M." (1928, Richard D. Maurice; silent). . . . May 4 at 5: "Blood of Jesus" (1941, Spencer Williams) and "Dirty Gertie from Harlem" (1946, Williams). . . . May 5 at 2:30: "Underworld" (1937, Micheaux) and "Dark Manhattan" (1937, Harry Fraser). . . . May 5 at 6: "Miracle in Harlem" (1948, Jack Kemp). . . . May 6 at 6: "Boy! What a Girl!" (1945, Leonard). . . . ¶ May 6 at 2:30: "The Whole Town's Talking" (1935, John Ford). . . . ¶ May 6 at 6: "American Madness" (†).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600)—A program of international films commemorating the start of the Spanish Civil War, sixty years ago. April 25 at 2 and 6:15 and April 26 at 9:15: "On the Empty Balcony" (1962, Jomi Garcia Ascot; Mexico). . . . April 25 at 4 and 8 and April 26 at 7: "Your Name Poisons My Dreams" (1996, Pilar Miró; Spain). . . . April 26 at 2 and April 27 at 4 and 8:15: "Land and Freedom" (1996, Ken Loach). . . . April 26 at 4: "Dreams and Nightmares" (1974, Abe Osheroff and Larry Klingman; United States) and "When the War Was Over" (1995, Barbara Probst Solomon; United States). . . . April 27 at 6 and May 2 at 2: "Forever Activists! Abraham Lincoln Brigade Veterans" (1991, Judy Montell; United States) and "Spanish Earth" (1937, Joris Ivens and Ernest Hemingway). . . . April 29 at 2, April 30 at 8:15, and May 3 at 4: "Raza" (1941, José Luis Sáez de Heredia; Spain). . . . April 29 at 4 and May 2 at 2: "Canciones para Despues de una Guerra" (1971, Basilio Martín Patino). . . . April 30 at 2 and May 2 at 6: "Chronicles of Hope" (1996, Jorge Amat). . . . April 30 at 4 and May 1 at 4:15 and 6:30: "Cousin Angelica" (1974, Carlos Saura; Spain). . . . May 1 at 2 and 8:45: "Man's Hope" (1939-45, André Malraux). . . . ¶ April 30 at 6:30: "Fame Whore" (1977, Jon Moritsugu). . . . ¶ May 2 at 8 and 9:45, May 3 at 6:15, 8, and 9:45, May 4 at 4, 6, 8, and 9:45, and May 6 at 2 and 4: "Color of a Brisk and Leaping Day" (1996, Christopher Münch).

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—April 29 at 12:30, 4:15 and 8:15: "Children of Paradise" (1945, Marcel Carné; in French), with Jean-Louis Barrault and Arletty. . . . May 6 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "The Green House" (1994, Philippe de Broca; in French), with Claude Rich.

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—A program of films starring Humphrey Bogart. April 26-27 at 2: "Beat the Devil" (1954, John Huston). . . . April 26 at 4: "The Treasure of the Sierra Madre" (1948, Huston). . . . April 27 at 4: "The Caine Mutiny" (1954, Edward Dmytryk). . . . ¶ Films by Chen Kaige; all in Mandarin, with English subtitles. May 3 at 2: "Yellow Earth" (1984). . . . May 3 at 4: "Farewell My Concubine" (1993). . . . May 4 at 5: "Life on a String" (1991). . . . ¶ May 4: Two works by Peter Bogdanovich—at 1, "A Dime a Dance" (1995), and at 2, "They All Laughed" (1981)—followed by a discussion with the director.

Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (864-5400)—A series of musical films, each preceded by a short cabaret performance featuring the music of the film's composer. April 29 at 7:30: Emily Loesser will sing songs by her father, Frank Loesser, followed by "Guys and Dolls" (1955, Joseph L. Mankiewicz). . . . May 6 at 7:30: Pattie Ben Peterson will sing songs by Frederick Loewe and Alan Jay Lerner, followed by "My Fair Lady" (1964, George Cukor), with Rex Harrison and Audrey Hepburn.

A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St.—A Sunday-night series of free films (and popcorn). On April 27 at 7, the feature will be "Barbarella" (1968, Roger Vadim), with Jane Fonda; on May 4 at 7, "Madame X" (1966, David Lowell Rich), with Lana Turner.

Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363)—Through April 24: A program of twenty-eight Scopitones, mini-musicals seen in coin-operated jukebox-type machines during the sixties. . . . From April 25: A two-week retrospective of the films of Hong Kong action actress Michelle Yeoh.

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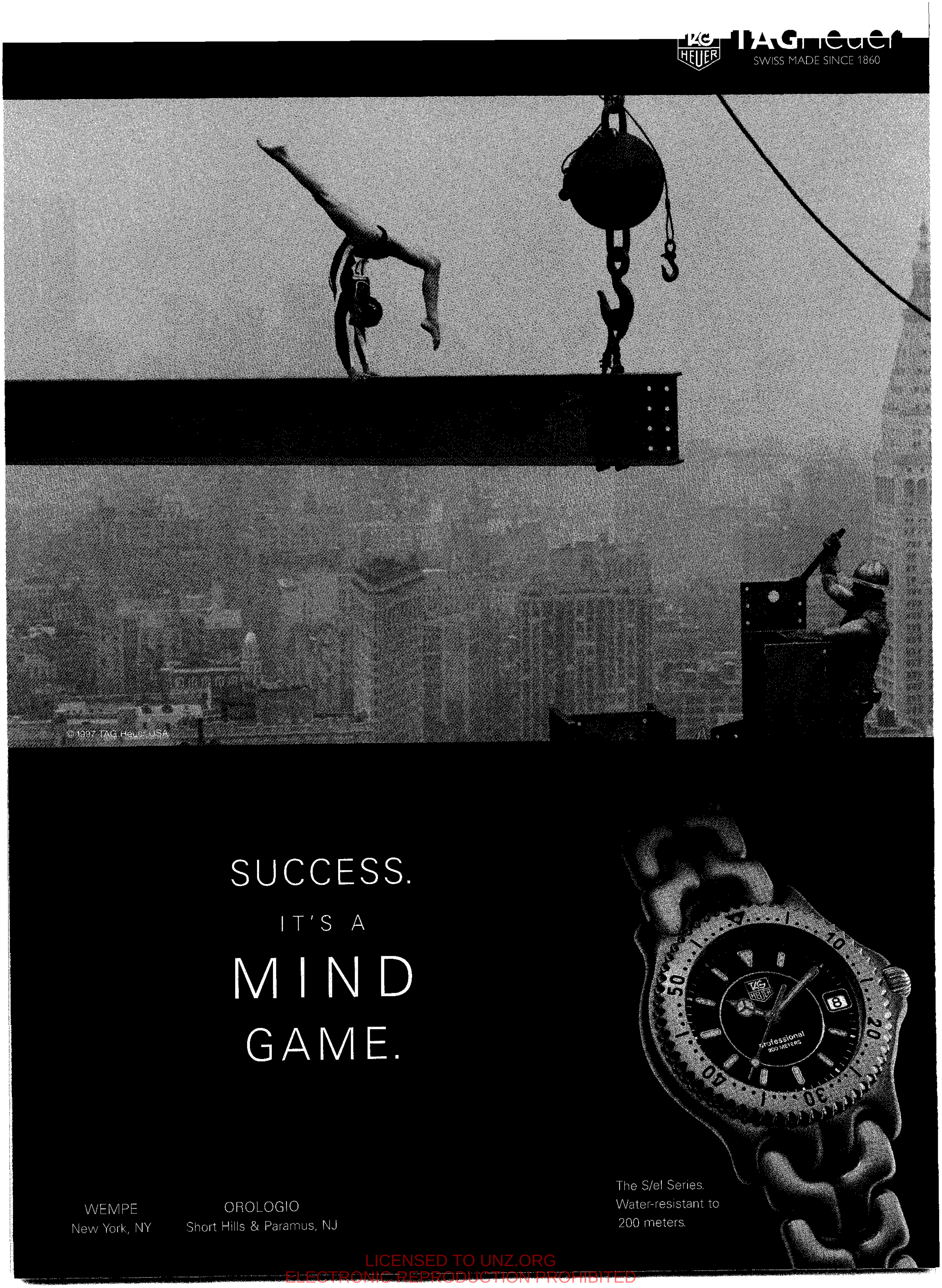

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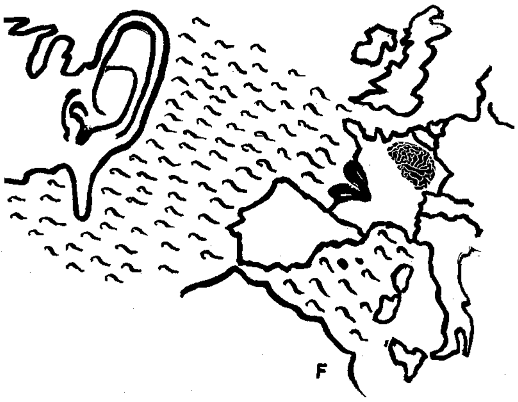
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

FOREIGN EXCHANGE

EUROPEAN intellectuals—French ones especially—have been telling the world's leaders what to do for as long as mind remembers. Voltaire served Frederick the Great of Prussia. Descartes attended Queen Christina of Sweden, where he died of the cold (I think, therefore I freeze). Diderot went to Catherine the Great of Russia; she sat entranced as he described to her an ideal Enlightenment society. Eighteen months later, her thank-you note was graceful: "I have listened with the greatest pleasure to the inspirations produced by your brilliant genius. There is just one difference between us. You write on paper; I, a poor Empress, write on human skin." What Diderot was offering was America. She turned it down. But there were others in the market—Franklin and Jefferson.

So, with French advice, America got to be America. Wandering, advisory European philosophers and intellectuals have been crossing the Atlantic ever since—from Crèvecoeur to Freud, Tocqueville to Marcuse. Hence the commonly held view, on both sides of the Atlantic, that America provides the spectacle, Europe the thought. During the Second World War, Sartre was flown in on a military plane to provide America with new stocks of existentialist notions. Simone de Beauvoir followed, fascinated by Nelson Algren and that great American invention the electric chair. It was Americans who invented the think tank; but most of the thoughtful fish who swim have been European. American graduate schools would be poorer places if they hadn't renewed themselves with imports of Foucault, Derrida, and Kristeva. When Yale appointed Paul de Man as Professor of French, in 1970, the newest philosophy, deconstruction, was born. It was European opinion—in this case European erasure—but it was quickly applied to America. (As Derrida said, "America *is* deconstruction.")

Lately, the office of European philosopher-intellectual has grown more difficult. One problem was a swath of sudden mortalities: de Man, Barthes, Foucault, Althusser were early lost to us, some in dramatic circumstances. Curious tales of deceptions and perfidies followed in their mortal wake; as George Steiner noted, the philosopher is curiously akin to the traitor. More damage was caused by the coming down of the Berlin Wall, in 1989. Marxism, of course, had long been Communism's most successful export. The loss of the supply deprived Western thinkers of a reason to bite the hand that fed them.



Meantime, on the terraces of the Villa Serbelloni—that Plato-haunted, Rockefeller-funded thinkers' retreat on Lake Como—grand philosophers may still be found, in a state of postmodern perplexity. There are plenty of ideas to measure for size, mostly Post-Something or Neo-Something. But today it's more often American thinkers, like Stephen Greenblatt and Richard Rorty, who dominate the chat. Indeed, if you now wish to find a Marxist philosopher, try a high-earning American professor. In the age of the Internet, those Yankee-obsessed European intellectuals who identified American experience with virtual reality have been rendered virtual themselves.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY FILIP PAGOWSKI

THE FINNISH CRESCENDO

LOOKING over the program schedules of major orchestras and opera houses these days, you might imagine that some odd virus has got into the computers, a bug that produces too many "j"s and "k"s and millions of vowels. Names like Esa-Pekka Salonen, Jukka-Pekka Saraste, Kaija Saariaho, and Einojuhani Rautavaara are materializing everywhere. The explanation: classical music is being overrun by Finns. In recent years, a country of only five million people has produced a disproportionate number of the world's leading singers, three conductors of major symphony orchestras, and various composers of international stature. The music of Jean Sibelius, the country's national musical hero, has regained most of the tremendous international popularity that it enjoyed earlier in the century.

Why does this isolated country have so much music in it? Pekka Hako, the director of the Finnish Music Information Center, in Helsinki, has this theory on the great tradition of Finnish singing: "There are so few people in a large country that they have to yell to each other." The pianist Olli Mustonen thinks that the highly peculiar, quasi-Asiatic Finnish language teaches musical values through its strong rhythms and murmuring vowels. Seppo Kimanen, the director of a renowned chamber-music festival in tiny Kuhmo, not far from the Arctic Circle, cites the inspiringly untamed Finnish landscape. "As a young boy," he says, "I remember going to the woods with my father, and I got this tremendous urge to sing and make music." Less romantically, the conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen notes that for Finns, who tend to be shy and conformist in their working life, music is a way of cutting loose. "The two big karaoke nations are Finland and Japan," he points out.

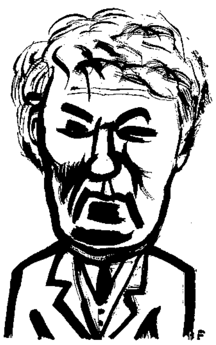
Salonen, who brings the L.A. Philharmonic to Avery Fisher Hall next month, gives a great deal of credit to the Finnish music-education system. While other European welfare states have trimmed down, Finland has maintained its "intellectual subsidies," devoting fourteen per cent of its budget to education, research, and culture. Also, the government has prodded corporations to recognize music as an industry for export. Salonen tells this story: "I did a concert in Bologna, and I met with people from the Finnish Consulate in Rome. There was a trade secretary who was walking around in the center of Bologna and saw advertisements for Saab and Ericsson and so forth, and he said, 'Well, this is different, because Sweden has had these international brand names for about fifty years . . . and we Finns, we only have you guys'—and he pointed at me."

Perhaps the healthiest aspect of Finnish musical life is that contemporary composers are not shut out of mainstream concert programs, as they often are elsewhere. Jukka-Pekka Saraste, who conducts both the Toronto Symphony and the Finnish Radio Symphony, reports that Finns absorb "advanced" music without visible distress; composers like Magnus Lindberg and Kaija Saariaho, who came out of avant-garde movements of the nineteen-seventies, have achieved remarkable breakthroughs. "When there's a new work by Lindberg," Saraste says, "the hall is packed." Everyone seems to compose: Olli Mustonen and Ralf Gothoni, another celebrated pianist, write music on the side, and Salonen produces pieces notable for their velocity and wit.

Classical music, which so often inflamed European nationalist aspirations in the nineteenth century, has kept its vital role in Finland. There, composers and performers are treated as folk heroes. Needless to say, they require adjustment when they hit the so-called big time in America.

WRITE-IN CANDIDATE

In November, 1995, just after Seamus Heaney won the Nobel Prize, Gay Byrne, the host of Ireland's Friday-night "Late Late Show," offered his audience a prize if they could quote three lines from a Seamus Heaney poem. No one could. And yet Heaney is an immensely popular poet in Ireland—so popular that if he wants to replace Mary Robinson as President next November the job is his.



One of the first to propose Heaney for President was Conor Cruise O'Brien in the *Irish Independent.* He praised Heaney's diplomatic skill, pointing out that the poet would be acceptable to most factions in Ireland even though he is a Northern Catholic. This is praise indeed coming from O'Brien, who was once a minister in the Dublin government, and who does not normally have much good to say about Northern Irish Catholics. His support of someone like Heaney would usually be the kiss of death.

But this is different. Most people in Ireland love Heaney. When he won the Nobel Prize, the Irish government held an enormous reception at Dublin Castle. People clutched copies of his "Selected Poems 1966-1987" as they once clutched prayer books. The last time a poet was held in such esteem in Ireland was in the early days of the Irish Free State, when W. B. Yeats was a senator. But Heaney is far less a public man than Yeats. He has written a poem that would have been unthinkable for the older poet—"Whatever You Say Say Nothing." In another poem, "Exposure," Heaney described himself as "an inner émigré, grown long-haired / And thoughtful." But if he should be entertaining the prospect of becoming the head of state in Ireland—and he has the whole summer to think about it—few would dare oppose him.

In fact, the general view among Dubliners is that Heaney is too good for a job that may be prestigious but is severely constricting and often downright boring. The President has virtually no executive powers and has to get permission from the government to travel abroad; every speech he gives must be vetted—hardly what a great poet is used to.

The pros and cons of a Heaney Presidency were the talk of a high-level dinner party the other evening in the Dublin suburb of Monkstown. One government official said, "Since Mary Robinson quotes him so much, then he might as well take the job himself." "No," countered a woman across the table. "He's too sleepy-looking. And he looks like a farmer." This prompted the host, who had made a fortune in property speculation, to jump in. "Heaney?" he said. "He's got a Northern accent. The first thing I do when I hear a Northern accent on TV is turn the set off. Then I unplug it, just to make sure." He was shouted down. Heaney had translated Dante. He had won the Nobel Prize. He was good enough for Harvard. He was, the host was roundly assured, the most civilized man in Ireland.

THE DOPPELGÄNGER

Recently, in the small German town of Prenzlau, it looked as though the late East German head of state and Party Chief Erich Honecker had returned from the dead. There, on the sidewalk, in the green and purple light of a discothèque called Max, stood the familiar figure, waving at his former subjects. A young man dressed in a leather jacket put out his hand. "Hey, Honi, what's happening?" he said. "I thought we'd got rid of you." The old man lifted his hat and returned the handshake with a smile. "For peace and socialism, be prepared!" he said, and the young man gave the old reply: "Always prepared!"

Kurt Schmidt never dreamed that he would have a post-retirement career as an Erich Honecker impersonator. At seventy-five, he is the main attraction of the "Ostalgie-Party," a show that provides politically incorrect entertainment to dance clubs and parties by evoking the old East Germany for a night. Among the extras are a twenty-foot-high Lenin statue made from Styrofoam, and the Easty Girls—three teen-agers who perform socialist youth songs set to a techno beat.

Entering Max's, Schmidt stopped to autograph photos. Accompanied by figures dressed as East German soldiers and State Security agents in black leather coats, he made his way to the dance floor. "My dear young friends," he began. "I welcome you from the bottom of my heart." The crowd cheered, expecting him to laugh, but Schmidt went on to speak about the con-

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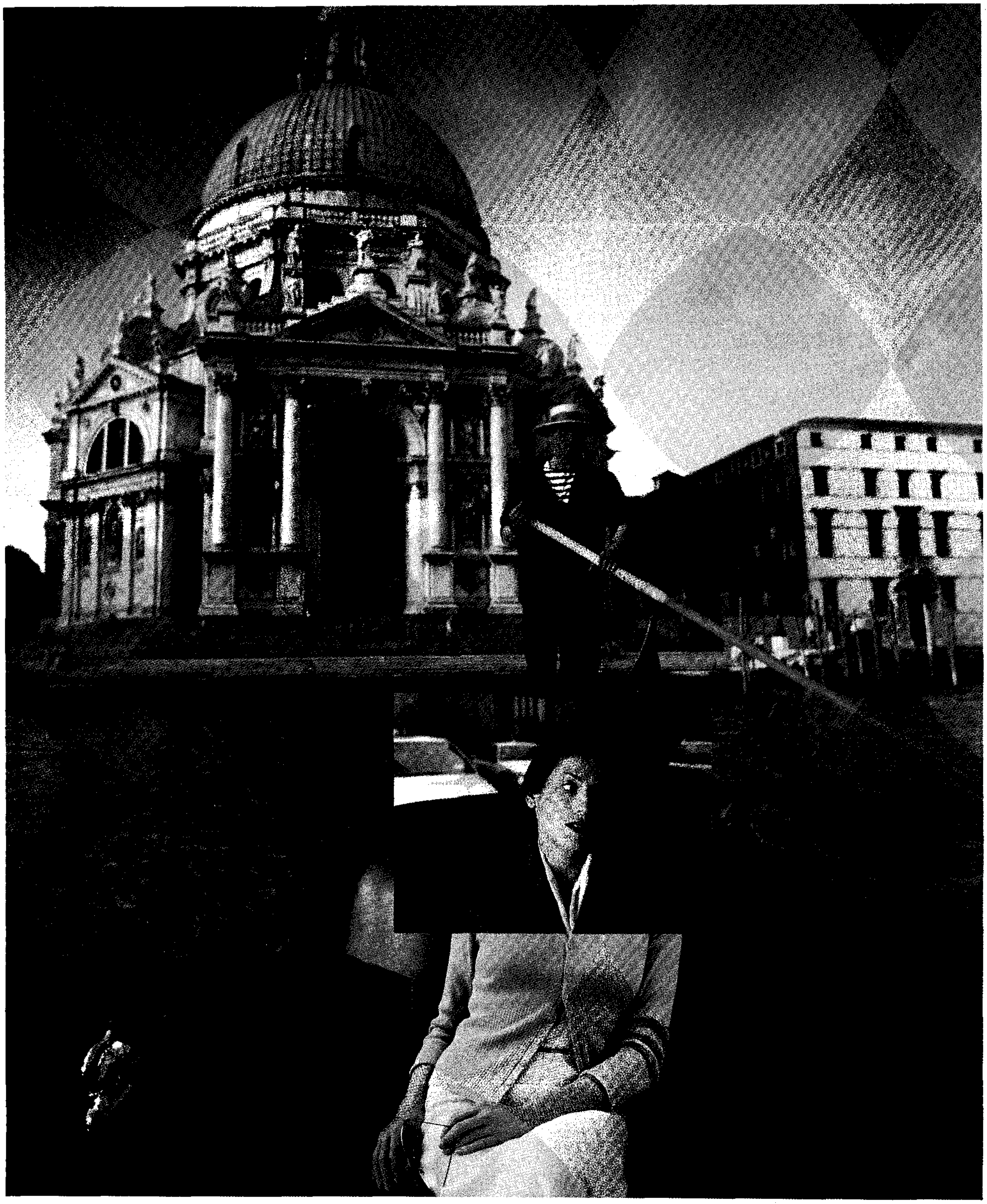

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fusion that had come with reunification, about the wall that still ran through people's heads, and he ended by wishing everyone a secure job that would pay the bills. For a moment, the crowd was silent, surprised by the sudden reminder of real fears in a town with twenty-five-per-cent unemployment. But then the music started up again, and the laughter returned.

"Isn't he cute?" a woman in her thirties said. A young man, nursing a half-empty beer, was less impressed. "Who cares?" he said. "It's just another way to get at people's money."

A few days later, Schmidt relaxed with a cup of coffee in his apartment in Wolfen, near Leipzig. He and his wife have lived there since 1963, when he was appointed "cultural organizer" of the local chemical plant. It was a good job, but he lost it when a package from his sister in the West caught the eye of the State Security Police. Instead of scheduling dance groups and accordion players, he found himself shovelling chemicals under life-threatening conditions. He survived the ordeal with bleeding ulcers, but his son, who also took a job in the plant, died at age thirty-two from inhaling poisonous gas.

Hearing Schmidt describe those days, one is tempted to think of his Honecker routine as an act of revenge. But Schmidt says that he got into the doppelgänger business because strangers would stop him in the street, wondering whether he was the fallen dictator. "Besides," he adds, "the parties are just good fun, and I like being around young people. It's time for us to get over Honecker."

FOR BETTER, FOR WORSE

SOME years ago at a lunch party in a seventeenth-century palazzo in southern Italy, the hostess—a contessa in her late fifties—turned to a newcomer and said, in a tranquil voice she might have used to discuss gardening, "I should explain to you, my dear, that my husband and I get along in a very particular way. When he is courting a girl, I try to be understanding and to help with any problems. Sometimes he and my sons are interested in the same woman, and then—it's quite funny—I have to be the peacemaker."

No one who knows the contessa—a handsome, strong-minded, highly educated woman—would call her a victim, or say that her thirty-year marriage to a notoriously unfaithful man is a failure. She and her husband have an aura of equable domesticity which grows out of a long and intimate partnership that has produced many children and grandchildren. The count and the contessa epitomize the peculiarly Italian talent for staying married, come what may.

Italians fall in love as often as anyone else, but marriage in Italy represents more than the union of two ardent hearts. It involves mothers and fathers and relatives and property and social standing. Italians believe in long engagements, and having known each other for ages the new husband and wife don't necessarily expect to be soul mates. They are husband and wife—that's enough.

In a country where the local prostitute is as visible a presence in many middle-class neighborhoods as the butcher or the baker, the Italians have always known how to separate sex from marriage. Some conventions of Italian life seem designed to encourage extracurricular sex. The obligatory summer exodus from the cities, when almost all Italian wives and children go off to the sea or the mountains, is considered a time when husbands who stay behind are let off the leash to cavort with their mistresses or with enterprising American coeds on their junior year abroad. Tradition of more recent standing allows vacationing wives discreet encounters with tennis and aerobics instructors and the ever-ready *bagnini*—the muscular men who rent beach umbrellas. The rule for women is: Don't get caught. The rule for men is: Get caught or not, but don't even think about breaking up your marriage. Floating in the background is the very Latin idea that for a man having lovers is a sign of virility that even his wife can learn to value. "My husband only has gorgeous girlfriends," a Milanese woman says, as if somehow the fact reflected well on her.

Despite advances by Italian women in business and the professions, the old double standard in Italy is alive and healthy: the man is free, and the woman is free to serve the man. This efficient philosophy is strengthened by the fact that divorce in Italy is a recent innovation; it was instituted only in 1970 and remains a long, tough process, not to be undertaken lightly.

The differences between Italian and American attitudes toward adultery are never more apparent than when the conversation turns to political sex scandals. Italians regard American shock over a married congressman's affair with his secretary as childish puritanism. The Italian theory is that powerful men naturally attract women and take advantage of it; doing so is a demonstration of general excellence of character. In Italy, the shine on President Kennedy's halo is increased by the number of women he had alongside an exemplary marriage. Jacqueline Kennedy—elegant, a good mother, a loyal and apparently unperturbed Catholic spouse—represents the ideal for Italian wives.

Italian men, however wandering, are themselves experts at staying married. "They never leave their wives!" says a beautiful Englishwoman who lives in Florence and is married to an Italian. "They might sleep with everybody, they might even go to live with someone else for a while. But they never really cut the attachment." Perhaps the most famous wandering Italian husband was Marcello Mastroianni. Few of his international fans knew that he had a wife, Flora, who stayed quietly at home in Rome while Mastroianni had affairs with some of the most celebrated actresses of the day and fathered a child with Catherine Deneuve. At his funeral in Paris, Deneuve and the woman who was his last companion figured prominently. At the Italian state funeral, however, Mastroianni's widow occupied the post of honor, a reward for decades of patience.

Asked whether he thought his friend the contessa was "happy," an Italian man of the world replied, " 'Happy' is debatable. But her husband depends on her. Her children and grandchildren worship her. She's had to sacrifice, but she's the pillar of the family. And you know what that means?" He whispered, "Power." ♦

"Foreign Exchange," Malcolm Bradbury; "The Finnish Crescendo," Alex Ross; "Write-In Candidate," Colm Tóibín; "The Doppelgänger," Elmar Lueth; "For Better, For Worse," Andrea Lee.

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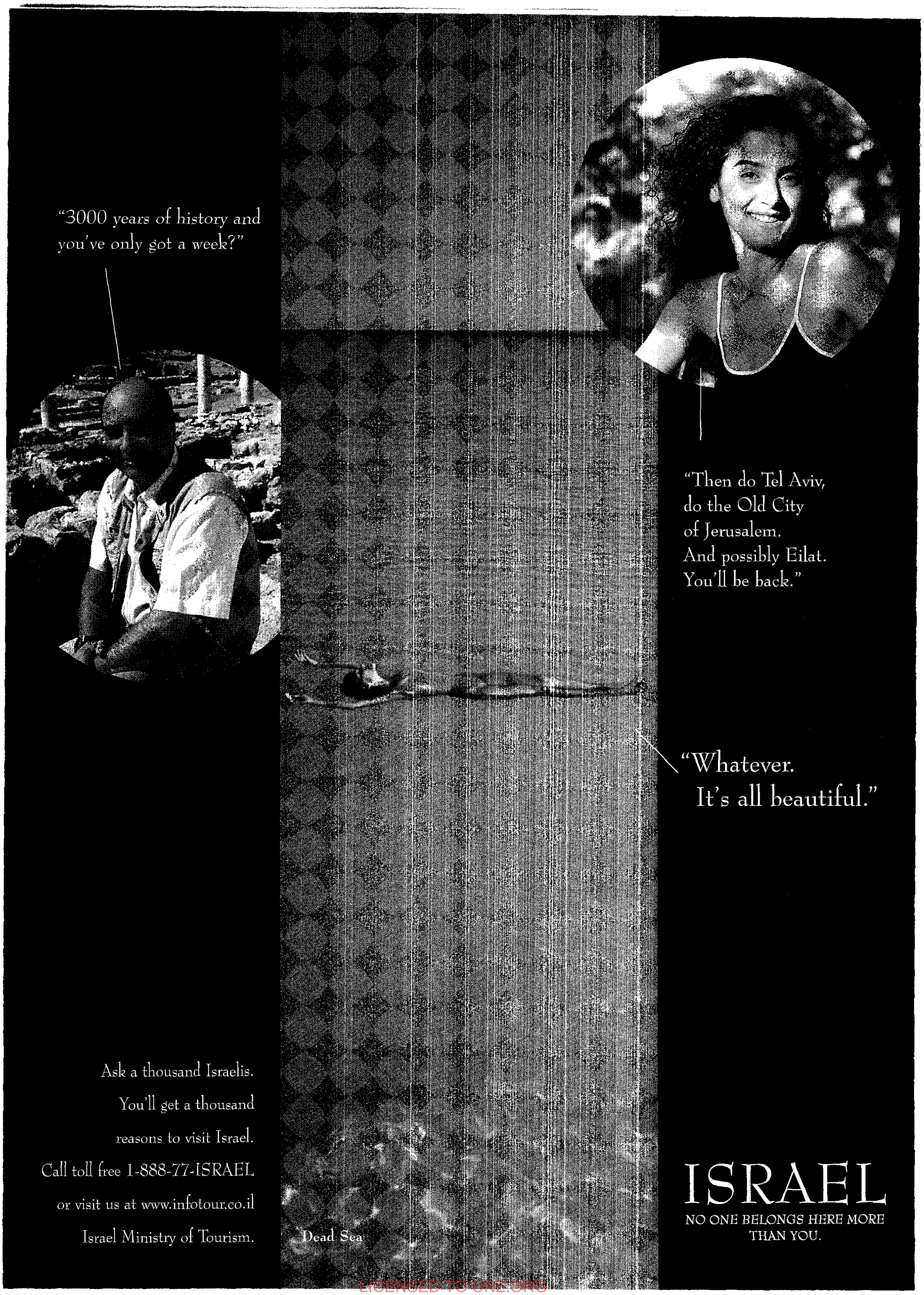
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THE POLITICAL SCENE

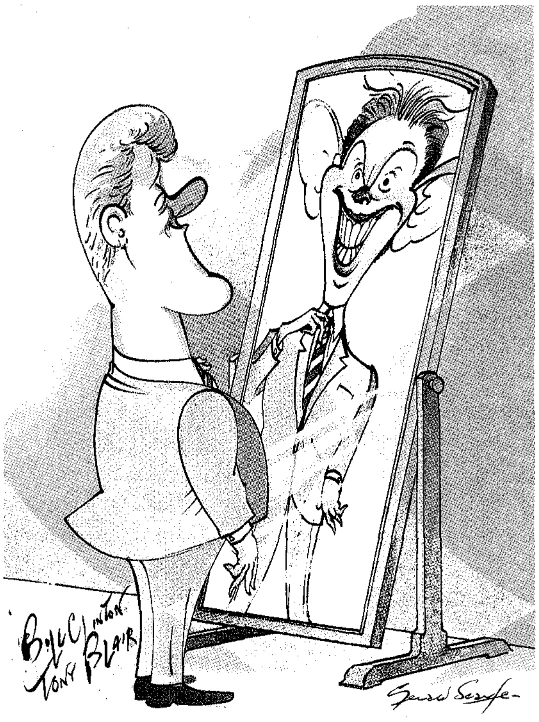
SMALL COMFORT

Why are Tony Blair's modest proposals so enormously appealing to Britons?

BY JOE KLEIN

ON a Friday afternoon in early April, several hours before John Major gathered his flag-waving, furiously harrumphing, but dwindling Tory legions for their first big rally of the British election campaign, at the Royal Albert Hall, Labour's Tony Blair convened a different sort of public meeting—a question-and-answer session for "undecided" voters—at one of England's numerous Victoria Halls, a pointedly modest one in the Staffordshire town of Kidsgrove. The unsubtle juxtaposition of Royal Albert and Spare Victoria, and of a meeting "seeking converts as opposed to preaching to the converted," as a Blair aide put it, was seen as more cute than clever by much of the British press: yet another superficial American-style marketing ploy. The next day's papers mentioned Kidsgrove only in passing. Still, for a transatlantic visitor it was an instructive event—and not just because Tony Blair was trying his hand at the very sort of town-hall meeting that has become Bill Clinton's political signature. Blair's performance that day was memorable: transcendent, stirring, and almost entirely devoid of substance—a triumph of magisterial vacuity.

Blair stood at a white lectern in the middle of the room, surrounded by about three hundred middle-aged, middle-class, middle Britons—vaguely Toryish in dress and demeanor, and noticeably less rude than the Labour throngs of yore, but clearly predisposed toward him. He was greeted by an ovation, and fielded questions in clumps of three, which were solicited by the local Labour candidate for Parliament. Blair took off his coat, and performed in white shirtsleeves that were nearly as blinding as his famous smile. The questions were familiar: what was he going to do about pensions, about unemployment, about college loans, about road-building, about the National Health Service, about small business? The answers were startling: we can't do much; we can only make a start; we'll do what we can within the existing financial constraints; we'll try to be fair. A young woman named Narissa Mather, a silversmith who had recently started her own business, despaired that small-business support was being cut back by the Tories, and asked Blair what he'd do for her. "I can't promise to restore all the money that's been taken out," he began, and he went on to say that Labour had some ideas for small business (although he didn't enumerate them, as Clinton would have); Labour wanted small business to have a level playing field, he said. "I hope we'll be able to demonstrate to the small-business sector that we've meant what we said," he concluded. "I hope you'll find something that will be of some small comfort there."



Blair knows the advantages of playing Britain's Bill Clinton—and he's learning the risks.

In fact, she did. "I didn't expect a quick fix," said Mather, who is twenty-five and says she'll vote this year for the first time. "You shouldn't promise what you can't deliver. Doing something about education, welfare, and the National Health Service is more important than giving thirty quid a week to people trying to start their own businesses." This was a common response. The audience found Blair's ostentatious modesty appealing. Apparently, so did the nation.

On that Friday, as the campaign opened in earnest, Labour led the Conservatives by more than twenty points in most polls. The lead—and the expectations—had been holding steady, and huge, for more than a year. The gap with the Tories was likely to close as the balloting approached, but it seemed a stunning development all the same: Labour had been fabulously inept for nearly a generation, a divisive and anachronistic force, a coal miners' party in the Information Age. It had been out of power for eighteen years. "If we blow this opportunity, we blow our place in history," Blair had said, introducing his party's campaign manifesto. "It's as simple as that."

There was an almost lurid intensity about the public's interest in the campaign: could Labour *possibly* blow it again? The Party had taken a spectacular pratfall at the end of the 1992 campaign, with the windy and relentless Neil Kinnock losing to the unloved John Major and the Tories. Now Major, who had immediately violated his campaign pledge not to raise taxes, appeared ashen and abandoned; and the Tories were beginning to seem quite ridiculous, beset by a skein of tabloid scandals: a Conservative M.P. had asphyxiated himself while wearing women's lingerie; another had been caught with a teen-age "night-club hostess"; others were accused of homosexual affairs and of accepting packets of cash in return for raising specific issues in Parliament during Question Time.

By contrast, Blair had made Labour dour. Like Clinton, he had yanked his garrulous old left-wing political party toward a more acceptably moderate mar-

GERALD SCARFE

ket niche. There would be no more wild promises, no more blazing socialist dreams. Privately, Blair has allowed that one lesson he learned from watching Clinton's early travails was to be very careful about the promises he made. But he'd also calculated that a politician offering Britain only "some small comfort" might seem particularly fresh—and trustworthy—after eighteen years of intense ideological warfare and extravagant claims by both parties.

And so Tony Blair tiptoed across the political landscape, taking no chances. But avoiding risk can itself be a risk, and the very insubstantiality of his offer might well come back to haunt him, even in the rush of a six-week campaign (a long haul by British standards). If Blair's cascade of non-promises and miniature proposals seemed refreshingly candid to his audiences, the rhetorical fabric that held it together was faded and threadbare. It was a knockoff of familiar New Democrat focus-group themes—especially the weary trinity of "opportunity," "responsibility," and "community." Blair said he would devote himself to families that "work hard" and "play by the rules." He promised a "third way" between "the old left and the new right." He said that the election was a choice between "hope" and "fear." He defied anyone "to deny this is a radical program," and added, "But it is in the radical center."

Many of these formulations once held promise—the hope of a tougher, more rigorous public activism—but they have worn badly in the nineties, as Bill Clinton clunked through his first term and dithered the first hundred days of his second, accomplishing little more than a classic conservative (though undeniably welcome) fiscal restraint. Watching Tony Blair lope along the same course, and re-create the Clintonian vision of a society in which baby boomers could feel socially responsible and still afford designer labels, one had to wonder what, finally, the New Democrat and New Labour movements were substantively all about—except, obviously, the successful pursuit of power.

Several days after the Kidsgrove meeting, Blair visited the financial community in the City of London to declare that Labour was now "the party of business" and that it represented a "third way." Afterward, I had a brisk philosophical discussion with Alastair Campbell, the Labour campaign's chief spokesman. I asked him what "third way" meant.

"It means neither old left nor new right," he said. I asked what that would mean in terms of policies. "It means you keep what works and change what doesn't," he said. But was there a discernible pattern to what worked and what didn't? He said that the Tory efforts to "reform" the labor unions and boost private enterprise had pretty much worked. "But you also have to acknowledge the lack of attention to areas like education, welfare reform, and social cohesion." The reflexive use of the word "acknowledge," as opposed to "address"—or, Heaven forbid, "rectify"—seemed very close to the intellectual heart of New Labour.

TONY BLAIR is forty-three, which makes him three years younger than Bill Clinton was when he was elected President. He is a relatively tall man, but comes across smallish. Most British political cartoonists draw him as a flimsy character with a terrifying grin, reminiscent of the Joker in the movie version of "Batman," and there is some truth in that. His face is dignified in repose but collapses into antic eagerness whenever he cracks a smile. If Bill Clinton is the ultimate salesman, the sort of man you *would* buy a used car from, Blair at times seems the ultimate salesclerk anxiously peddling toaster ovens. But the appearance of insubstantiality is misleading: by all accounts, this is a disciplined, intellectually formidable, and very tough politician. There isn't a hint of scandal about him, and he is far more forthright than Bill Clinton has ever been, especially when it comes to criticizing the constituencies that have been at the heart of Labour's coalition.

Unlike Clinton, who insinuated himself upon the Democrats like a fog, Blair stormed the ramparts of Old Labour, directly challenging the Party's most sacred assumptions. He led the successful fight to rewrite Clause IV of the Labour charter, which was an unabashed paean to socialism, but he could also move with great subtlety, recasting the meaning of traditional Party rhetoric: the meaning of "progress" changed in the Blair canon from a euphemism for "socialism" to a euphemism for the embrace of new technology; indeed, it became the very sort of "progress" that trade unions had opposed in the past. Labour's proud proletarianism—with its notion of class warfare—was quietly supplanted when Blair appropriated Disraeli's "one-nation" appeal to social consciousness and national unity. Blair himself was about the farthest thing imaginable from a proletarian. Like Clinton, he had lived the ideology of upward mobility, rising from the humbler precincts of the middle class to the meritocratic élite, via Oxford and marriage to a sharp attorney named Cherie Booth (whose success had made his political habit possible). And, also like Clinton, Blair had gone public with his personal religious faith—another American-style campaign infestation—using it as a means to drag his party away from the "loony" life-style left and toward a more traditionally conservative posture (especially on issues of crime and social order).

There was a hard edge beneath this soft repositioning, though. Blair was brutal when he had to be. Compared to Clinton's buttery patronizing of the working stiff, Blair could be harsh—at times, to the point of ridicule—about Labour's trade-union base. The question came up at every public meeting: what did he owe the unions who were funding the Labour campaign, and when would he pay? He owed them nothing, he maintained. No more "beer and sandwiches" with the union bosses, he told the financial community. "I think I've been successful in lowering their expectations," he said at Kidsgrove. He had taken positions that would have been unthinkable for Labour in the past: against an increase in the income tax; in favor of privatizing some government services. And that, no doubt, is what Blair considers radical about his centrism: it is a violent departure from past dogma.

But it is centrism all the same, very much a ratification of the British status quo. Blair is far more eloquent—and convincing—when he is separating himself from the "old left" than he is when he is distinguishing himself from the "new right." Indeed, he and Margaret Thatcher have tossed each other furtive bouquets. There are reports that the Baroness has admitted, in select company, that "Tony Blair is a man who won't let Britain down"; the Labour leader, meanwhile, has posited himself as a "conviction" politician, like Thatcher. And his convictions do seem vaguely Thatcherite. But then Margaret Thatcher was something of a premature, if reluctant, New Democrat herself. She actually *implemented* many of the social programs that Bill Clinton has proposed, from "managed competition" in the National Health Service (which she called an "internal market") to an education policy that introduced national standards and independent, grant-maintained schools (which Americans call "charter" schools). Thatcherism may have seemed right wing to European social-democratic bureaucrophiles, but it rests firmly in the center—oh, all right, the radical center—of the transatlantic political spectrum. No doubt the Baroness would have preferred to scrap the welfare state entirely, but she couldn't: it was too popular, and too necessary, politically. And the same will hold for Blair, if he wins: he will find it impossible to roll back Tory entrepreneurialism. We are all damp Thatcherites now, splitting hairs in an entrepreneurial welfare state.

There do remain significant differences between Tony Blair and John Major: Labour would lean closer to Europe, and give a bit more autonomy to the roughnecks in Scotland and Wales. It would smooth the edges off some of the harsher Tory domestic policies. But in the end New Labour may be little more than a humane rhetorical mirage that technocrats like Tony Blair have created to prove to themselves that they haven't become middle-aged conservatives. "Blair appears to give us the opportunity to elect a Labour government without having one," says Roderick Nye, of the Social Market Foundation, an independent think tank. "And to pursue conservative policies without Tories."

THREE weeks before Election Day, Blair visited the Essex town of Basildon—a famous address in British politics, the home of Essex Man, a mythical creature who swung the 1992 election from Labour to Tory. Essex Man is the most marginal of voters, the prize catch of the electoral season—in theory, the suburban-dwelling skilled worker who Labour has always hoped would vote his "class interests" but who usually hasn't—and Basildon, which counts its ballots quickly, was where Essex Man first made his views known to the rest of the country on Election Night in 1992.

Blair had reason to be pleased about the meeting in Basildon. There were a few hostile questions, easily fielded, but Essex Man seemed tame and trusting, ready to roll out for Labour. The one dicey moment came from a different part of the political spectrum: "Up 'ere, mate! In the gods! On the third floor!" cried a voice from the balcony, and the past. This was Wigan Man, the voice of Old Labour, a retired autoworker named Derek West. "It's nothing personal," West said, "but one of the greatest things *he*"—pointing at Blair—"has done to put the Labour Party back was to knock the workingman, the cloth hat and pint of beer. . . . He disowns them, and that's completely wrong."

Blair responded crisply. He said the Party's values—progress and justice—remained the same. But, he added, "this is a movement, not a monument. It has to change with the times."

I searched for Wigan Man afterward but couldn't find him—and wondered if he'd taken "some small comfort" from Blair's remarks. New Labour was, after all, asking a greater sacrifice from him than from any of its other prospective constituencies: it was asking him to give up a dream of long standing—the vision of socialism. It had been an impractical dream, to be sure, but it had had heft and integrity, just as Margaret Thatcher's big ideas had. It seemed that in order to give Labour a viable present Blair had disowned both his party's contentious past and its dream of the future. That didn't leave much—except, perhaps, electability. And, as Bill Clinton has amply demonstrated, electability doesn't necessarily count for very much at all. ♦

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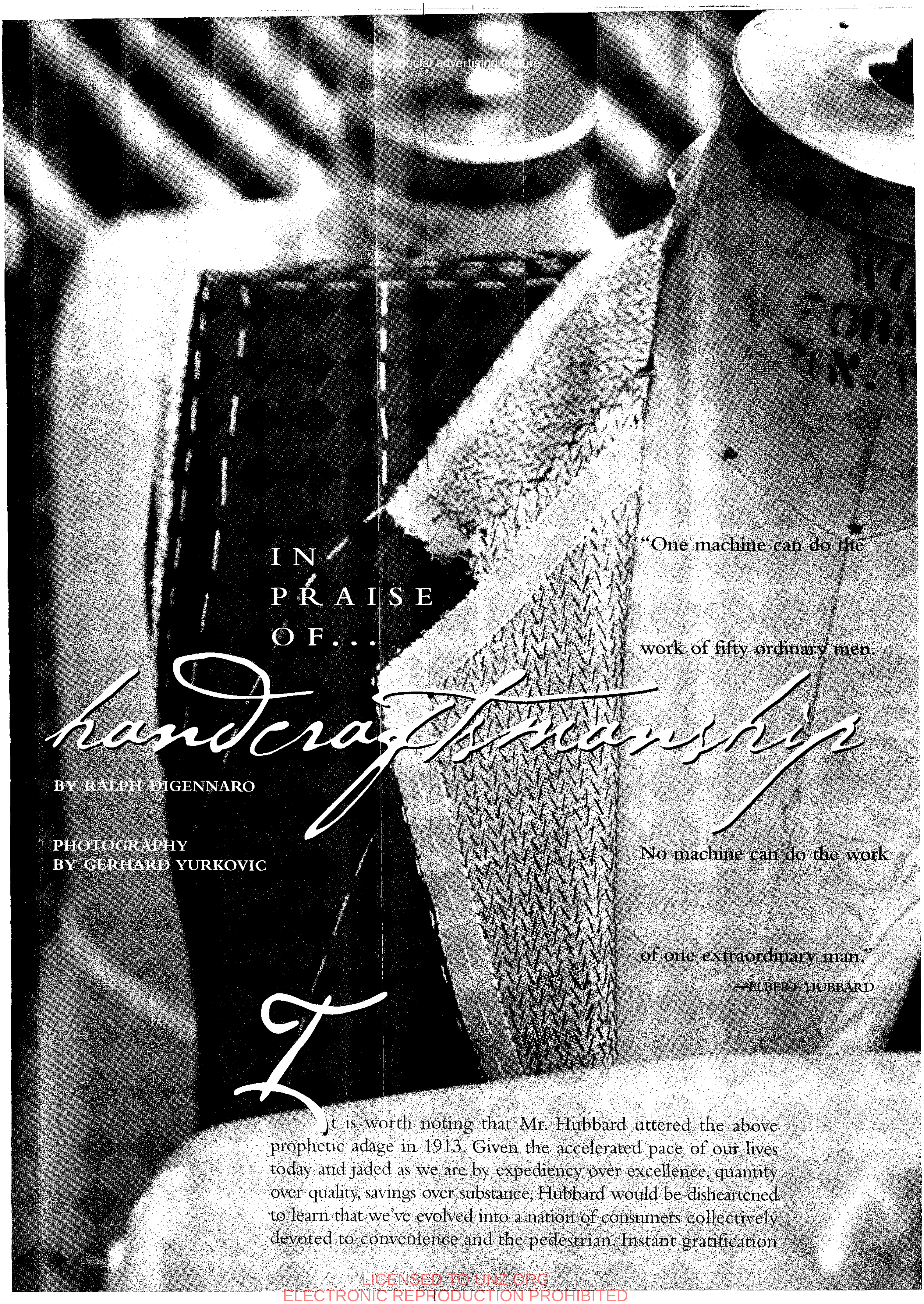


IN PRAISE OF... handcraftsmanship

BY RALPH DIGENNARO

PHOTOGRAPHY
BY GERHARD YURKOVIC

"One machine can do the work of fifty ordinary men. No machine can do the work of one extraordinary man."

—ELBERT HUBBARD

It is worth noting that Mr. Hubbard uttered the above prophetic adage in 1913. Given the accelerated pace of our lives today and jaded as we are by expediency over excellence, quantity over quality, savings over substance, Hubbard would be disheartened to learn that we've evolved into a nation of consumers collectively devoted to convenience and the pedestrian. Instant gratification

handcraftsmanship

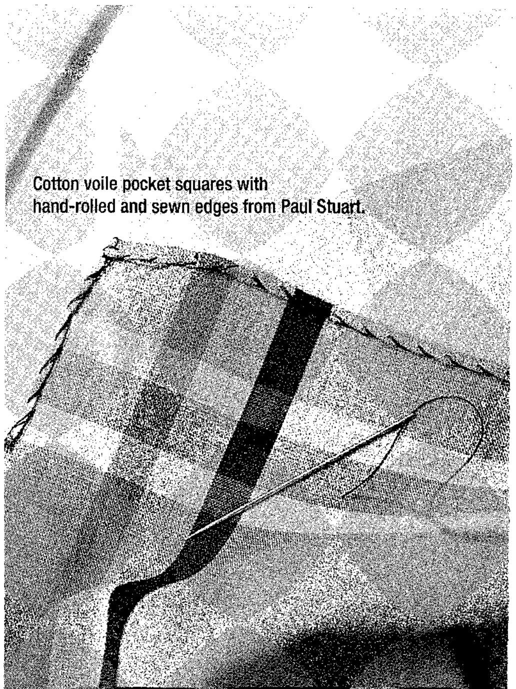
has become a religion, christened by a liturgy conceived and consecrated closer to home on Madison Avenue than any archdiocese. That certain "throwaway quality" so pervasive in the things we buy, sadly, has become commonplace. Fashion notwithstanding, rarely is a second thought given to an article of clothing whose life span ceases after a third wearing.

Perhaps it is not surprising that the word "shoddy" is an American coinage. The name stems from the "waste"—scraps or rags—left over in the manufacture of woolens. The inferior "shoddy" wool went into the clothing that outfitted the Union Army during the Civil War.

Our tolerance for trash, tons of it, might well be confused as part of America's heritage. But in truth, skilled craftsmen, artists, and artisans flourished throughout the United States in its beginning years and set standards for quality that ultimately defined America as a nation. And while World War II wreaked havoc on much of the workmanship that went into clothing—the War Production Board (WPB) outlawed any excesses or generous detailing that it deemed unnecessary, it was ultimately modern technology and the desire to produce offshore for higher profits that eroded the need for Americans who worked with their hands, plying a skill and craft handed down through generations.

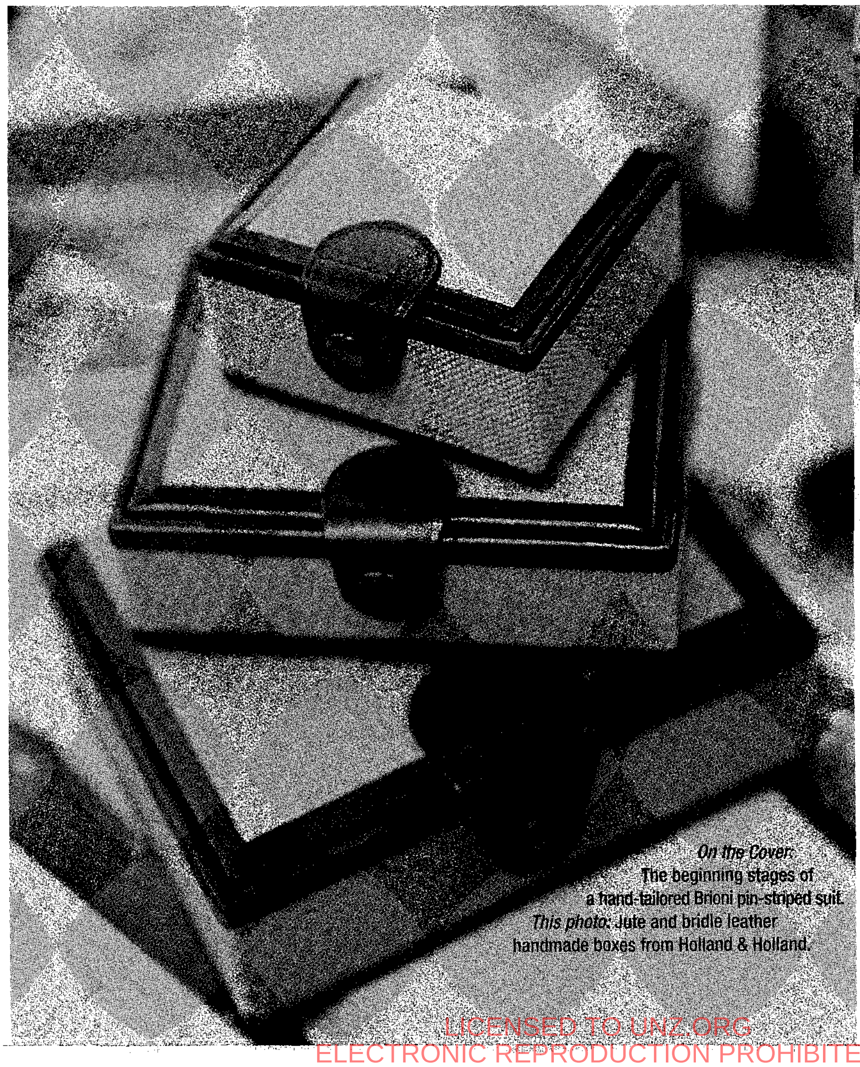
Just as we are at last witnessing a return to the generously cut, amply expressed suits of the (pre-WPB) thirties and forties, so too are we seeing a demand for handcraftsmanship and artisan quality. Increasingly Americans are learning to appreciate the inherent value in products as well-made as they could possibly be, with handwork in the details. High profits are not central to this hardly cost-efficient movement. Rather, certain companies are recognizing that hand workmanship, once the heart of their business, is worth returning to as a means of distinguishing themselves. Some manufacturers, such as the Robert Talbott Company in Carmel Valley, California, never stopped making their products by hand.

"We're considered sort of a dinosaur in the tie business because of our hand workmanship, but it's also one of the reasons we are where we are," says Audrey Talbott, chairwoman, CEO, and matriarch of the forty-seven-year-old company.

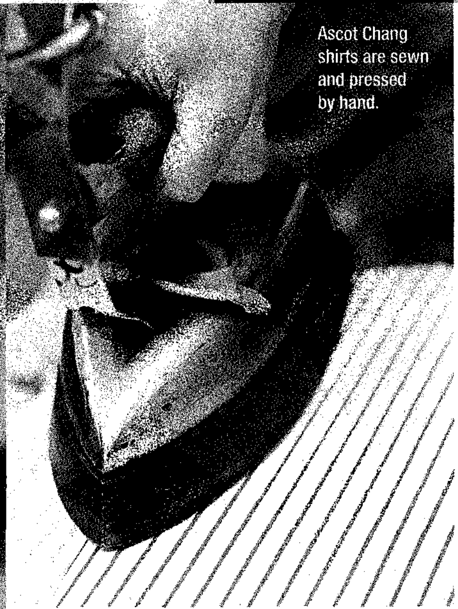


Cotton voile pocket squares with hand-rolled and sewn edges from Paul Stuart.

Patent leather wallet with brass clasp by Gucci.



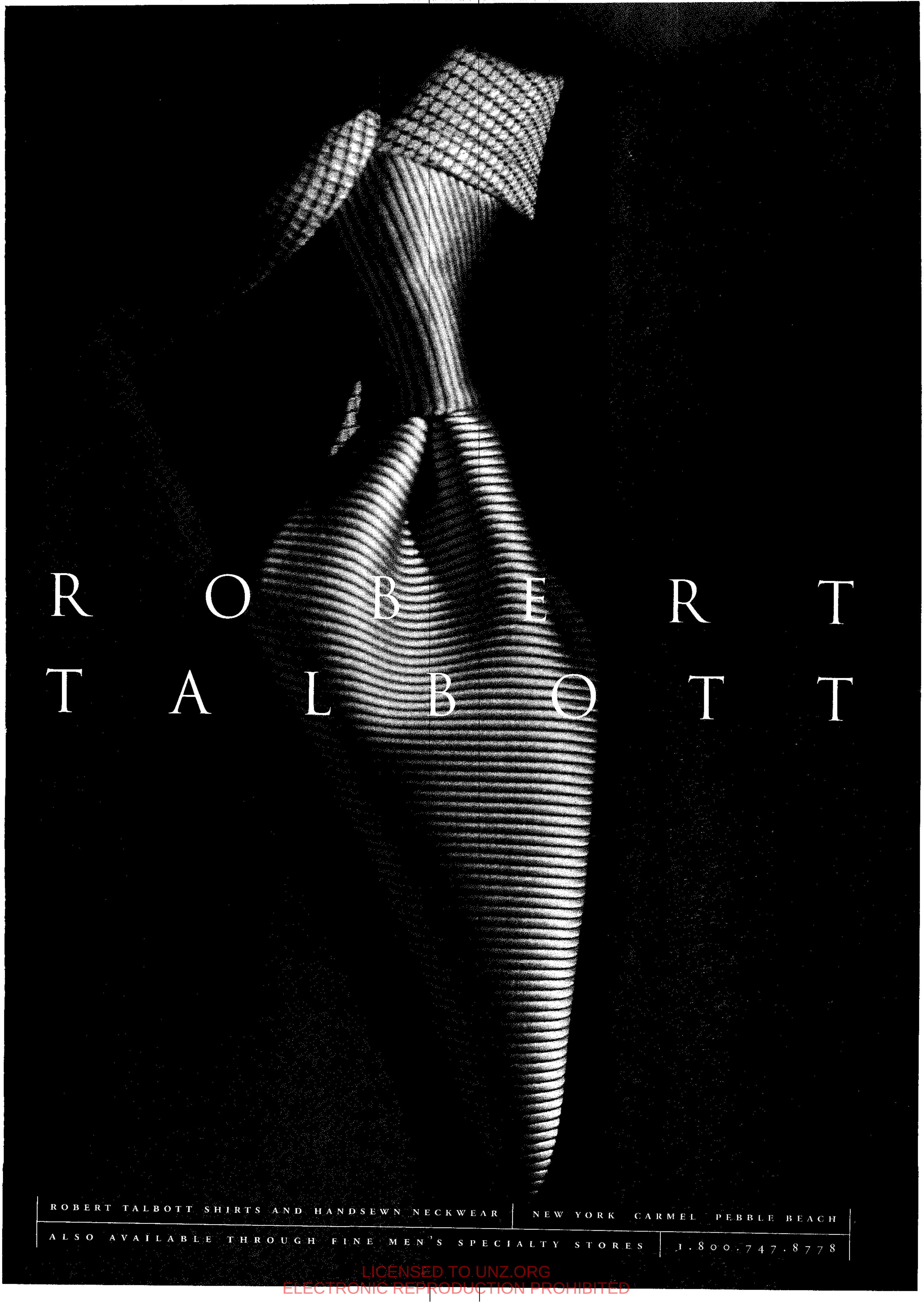
On the Cover: The beginning stages of a hand-tailored Brioni pin-striped suit. *This photo:* Jute and bridle leather handmade boxes from Holland & Holland.



Ascot Chang shirts are sewn and pressed by hand.

"Even after all these years, it's still great to walk back to our workrooms and see the gals with their needles and dedication. They're all so proud of their work. Many thread their needles at home so they can save time at work. Here in California we are blessed with a wonderfully ethnic labor market of superb seamstresses."

According to Mrs. Talbott, the very word "hand" has never lost its finesse in her estimation. "Right now we have a fantastic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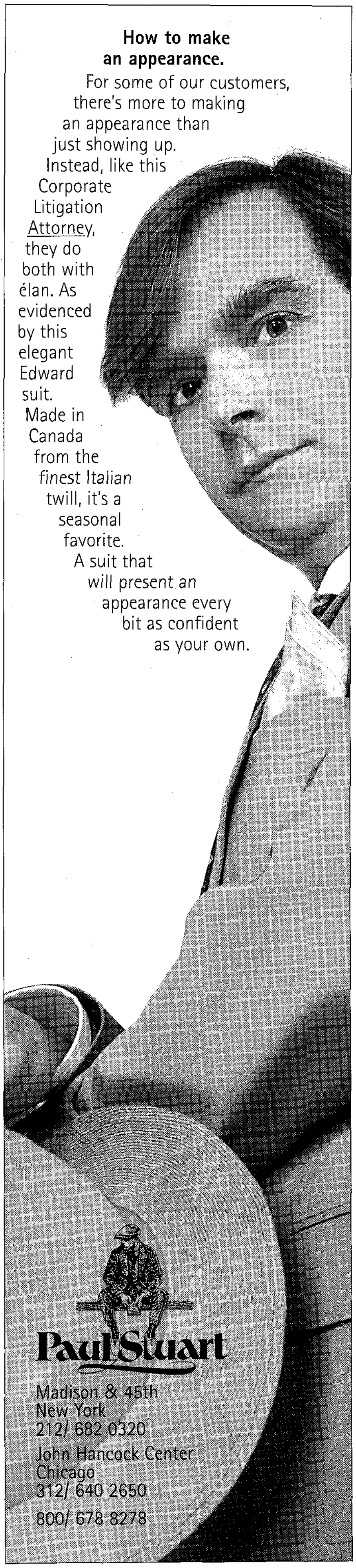

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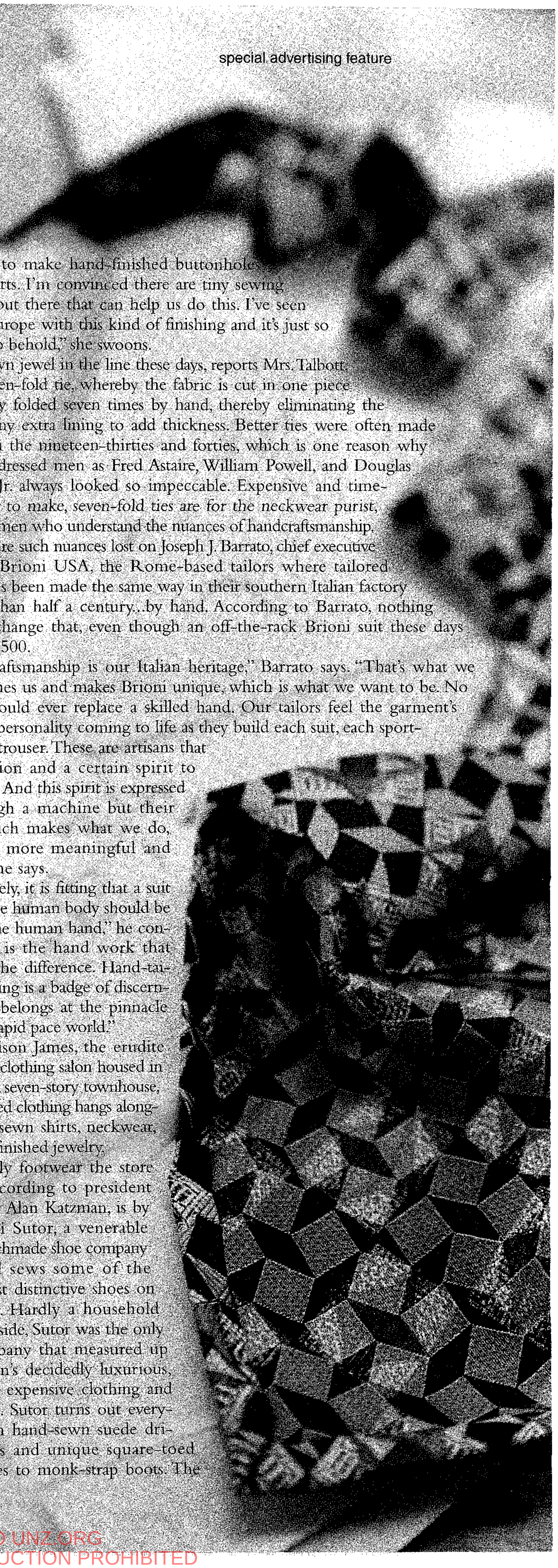


search on to make hand-finished buttonholes for our shirts. I'm convinced there are tiny sewing machines out there that can help us do this. I've seen shirts in Europe with this kind of finishing and it's just so beautiful to behold," she swoons.

The crown jewel in the line these days, reports Mrs. Talbott, is their seven-fold tie, whereby the fabric is cut in one piece and literally folded seven times by hand, thereby eliminating the need for any extra lining to add thickness. Better ties were often made this way in the nineteen-thirties and forties, which is one reason why such well-dressed men as Fred Astaire, William Powell, and Douglas Fairbanks Jr. always looked so impeccable. Expensive and time-consuming to make, seven-fold ties are for the neckwear purist, discerning men who understand the nuances of handcraftsmanship.

Neither are such nuances lost on Joseph J. Barrato, chief executive officer of Brioni USA, the Rome-based tailors where tailored clothing has been made the same way in their southern Italian factory for more than half a century...by hand. According to Barrato, nothing will ever change that, even though an off-the-rack Brioni suit these days starts at $2,500.

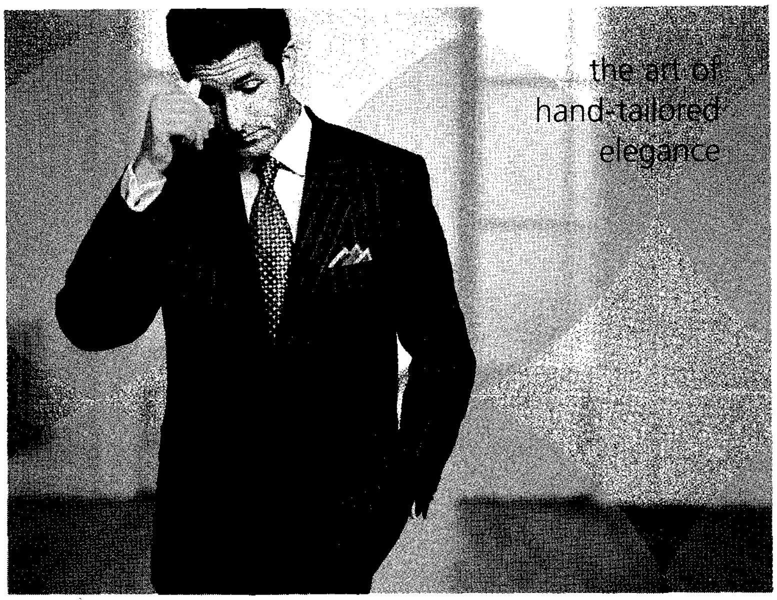
"Handcraftsmanship is our Italian heritage," Barrato says. "That's what we are. It defines us and makes Brioni unique, which is what we want to be. No machine could ever replace a skilled hand. Our tailors feel the garment's shape and personality coming to life as they build each suit, each sportcoat, each trouser. These are artisans that bring passion and a certain spirit to their work. And this spirit is expressed not through a machine but their hands, which makes what we do, that much more meaningful and timeless," he says.

"Ultimately, it is fitting that a suit worn by the human body should be made by the human hand," he continues. "It is the hand work that makes all the difference. Hand-tailored clothing is a badge of discernment that belongs at the pinnacle of today's rapid pace world."

At Harrison James, the erudite new men's clothing salon housed in a landmark, seven-story townhouse, hand-tailored clothing hangs alongside hand-sewn shirts, neckwear, and hand-finished jewelry.

'The only footwear the store carries, according to president and owner Alan Katzman, is by Mantellassi Sutor, a venerable Italian benchmade shoe company that hand sews some of the finest, most distinctive shoes on the planet. Hardly a household name stateside, Sutor was the only shoe company that measured up to Katzman's decidedly luxurious, deliriously expensive clothing and accessories. Sutor turns out everything from hand-sewn suede driving shoes and unique square-toed blucher ties to monk-strap boots. The

Robert Talbott still crafts
handmade seven-fold neckwear,
a rare art in tie manufacturing.



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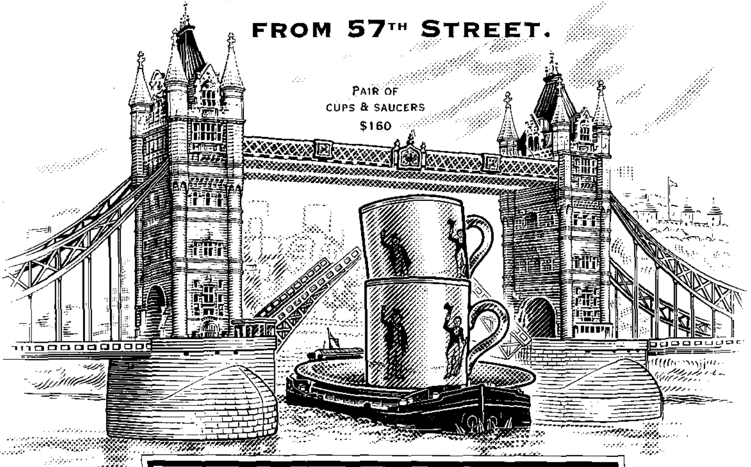

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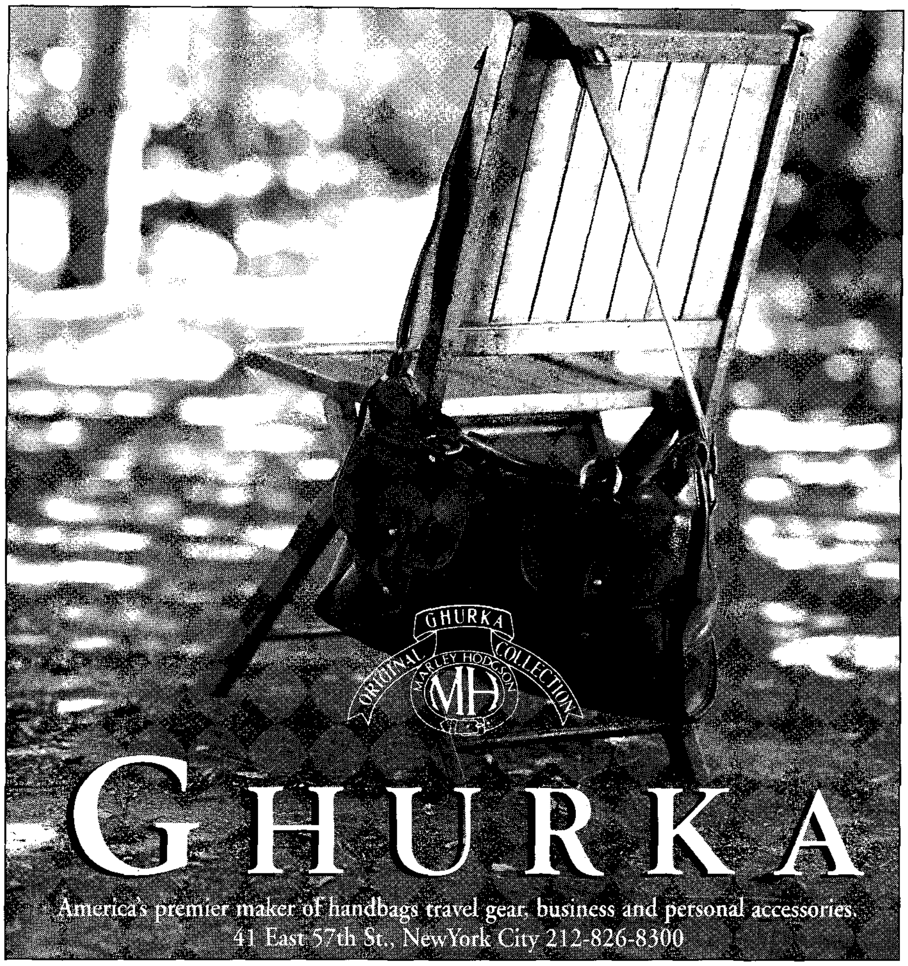
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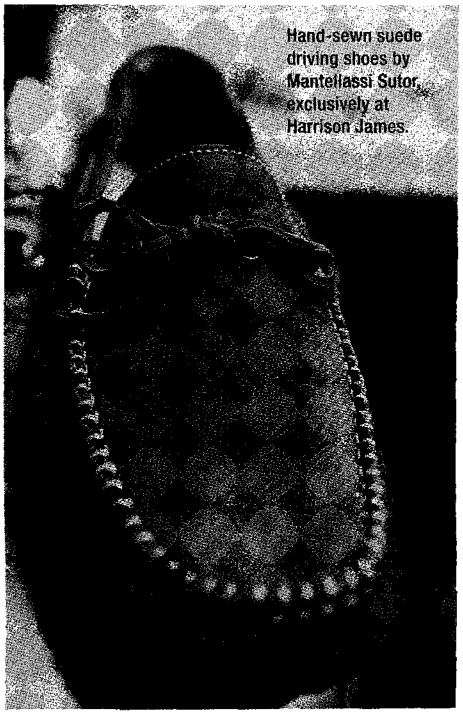
"It's a quality issue," says Katzman matter-of-factly. "The artisan-like workmanship and classic styling that goes into each Sutor shoe is consistent with everything else we do here."

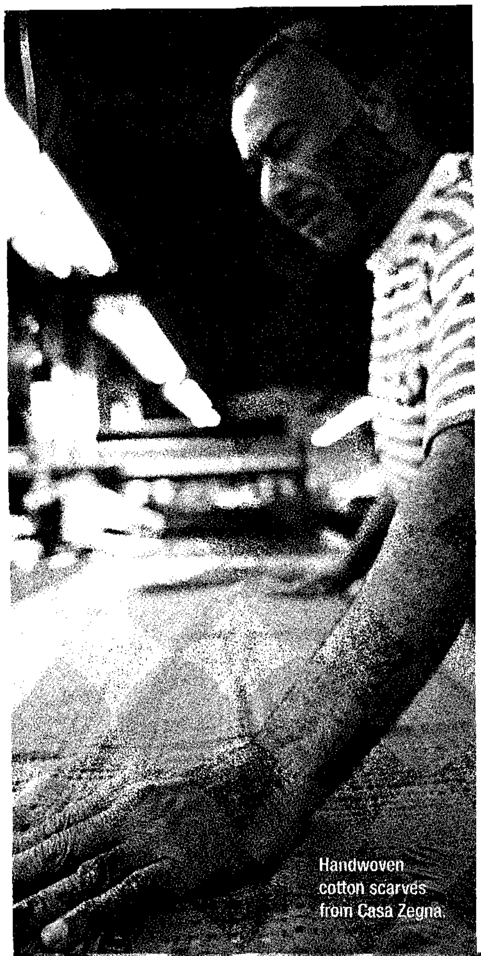
Little in the way of artisanship compares to Holland & Holland, the 162-year-old sporting weapons maker that bears Royal warrants of HRH The Prince of Wales and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh. Last spring, the London-based company opened an 8,000 square-foot U.S. flagship store on East 57th Street in a stately limestone facade townhouse. Strolling through the sportive, British colonial-inspired store is like stepping back in time at an old English hunt club.

Antique glass and walnut display cases offer handcrafted accessories such as hosiery, neckwear, scarves, jewelry, walking sticks, and everything else needed to turn a man or woman out in good kit. Exceptional are the handmade boxes of jute and dark brown bridle leather, Holland & Holland's signature leather accessories, along with the full-range collections of clothing and sportswear, luggage, and books. According to Alain Drach, Holland & Holland chairman and chief executive, making the best products is simple.

"It's merely a matter of refusing to compromise at any stage in their manufacture," says Drach. "This unforgiving ethos is applied to all that we do."

America's answer to Holland & Holland, at least as it pertains to luggage and small leather goods, is The Ghurka Collection, where skilled handcraftsmanship goes into


Hand-sewn suede driving shoes by Mantellassi Sutor, exclusively at Harrison James.

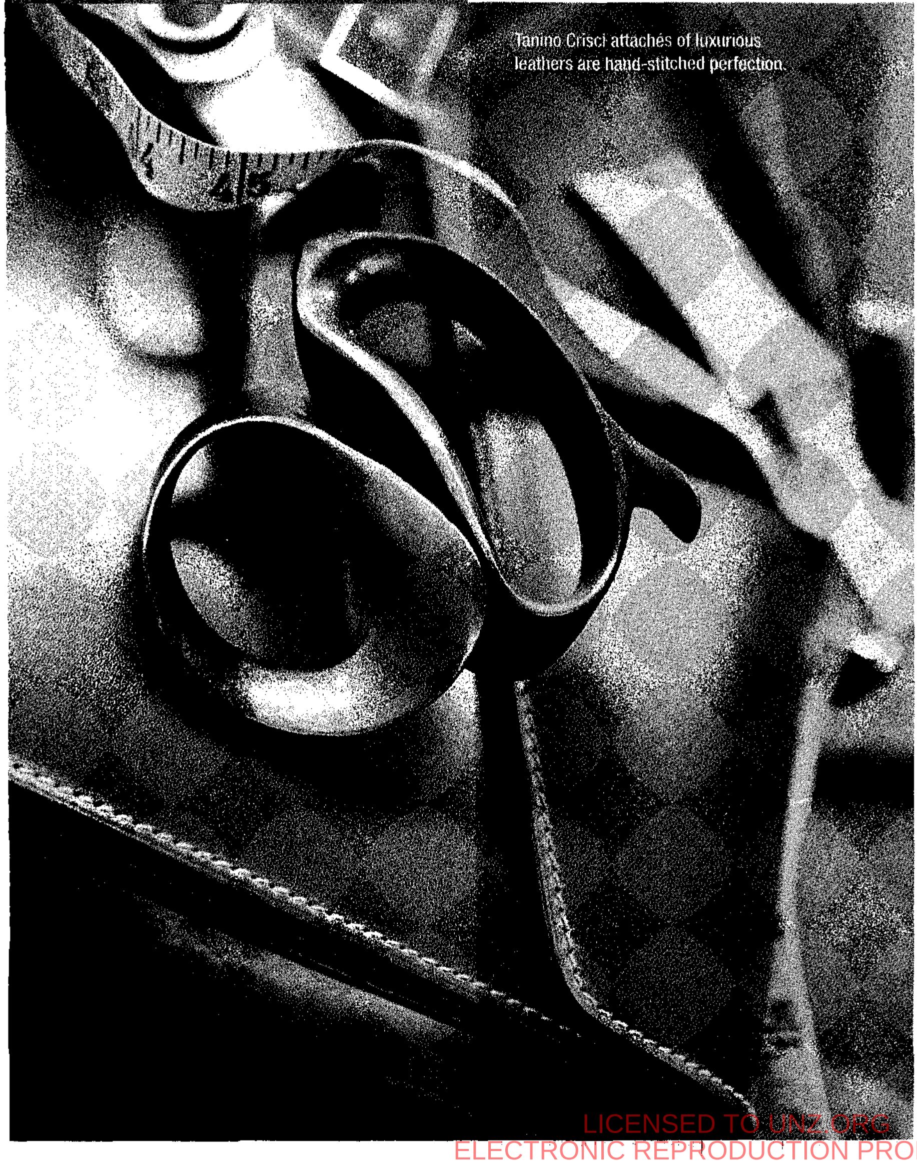


Handwoven cotton scarves from Casa Zegna.

every article the company manufactures in its Connecticut workrooms. Owner Marley Hodgson says Ghurka often rejects more leather than it accepts—so demanding are they that the best hides go into their products.

"Only five percent of the hides our tanneries initially present us with are used for Ghurka," says Hodgson. "Quality is so important that we regularly reject skins that have even the smallest blemish." From the smallest key holder to the huge trunks that recall elegant cruise travel of yesteryear, the immaculately finished handwork in Ghurka's vast line is readily apparent. Ghurka will also carefully custom repair its products, utilizing stocked and catalogued materials that are properly matched in age, finish, and color, which prevents the items from looking as if they were repaired, a time-consuming and labor-intensive service virtually unheard of today. Hodgson will never compromise in this regard.

Another man hardly given to compromise is Tom Yu, general manager of Ascot Chang, custom shirtmakers to the discerning gentleman in search of the best possible dress and formal shirts. Ascot Chang



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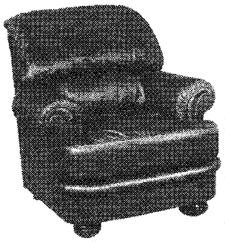

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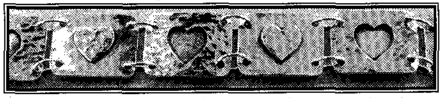

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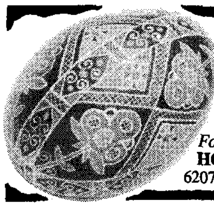

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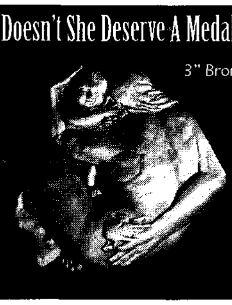

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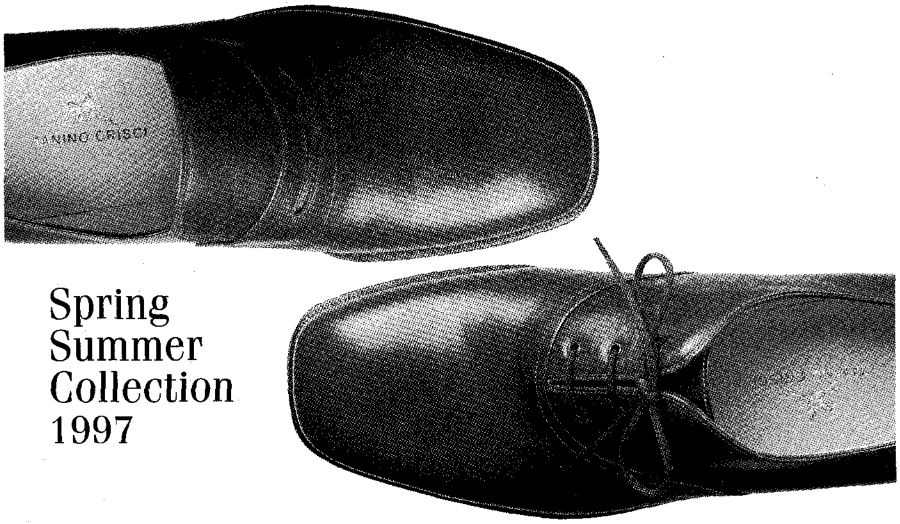

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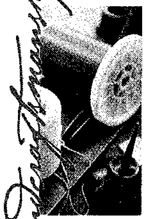

offers more than 3,000 fabrics from which to choose, along with an unlimited number of collar styles. Yu, considered one of the most knowledgeable shirtmakers in the business, is always personally available to aid in the selection process. In shirtmaking lingo, an Ascot Chang shirt is single-needle tailored with twenty-four stitches to the inch. Suffice it to say that few ready-made shirts go to this length, using a maximum of sixteen stitches per inch. Add handpicked, genuine mother-of-pearl buttons, and dress shirts just don't get any better in the way they fit, feel, and endure.

Increasingly, Americans are becoming more and more quality conscious. Our "quantity over quality" sensibility has been evolving to a higher level, closer to that of the Europeans, who prefer to settle for one impeccably constructed suit or bag and make good use of either, rather than boast an attic full of inferior ones. What man or woman doesn't have at least a few suits in their wardrobes they rarely or seldom wear for lack of proper fit, finesse, quality of fabric, or construction? The money spent on these garments could be put to better use with the purchase of a single, well-made suit that, while expensive, transforms the wearer into an ideal.

To be sure, anything that endures is worth having. New York is blessed with men's clothiers that have endured over the years precisely because they have never compromised on quality.

Stores such as Paul Stuart and J. Press remain true to the classics yet continue to update and move forward. Paul Stuart's inestimable buying team travels the globe to uncover the best possible furnishings, shoes, and accessories that will measure up to their hand-tailored clothing. Indeed, Paul Stuart is still one of the few stores that carry hand-finished cotton

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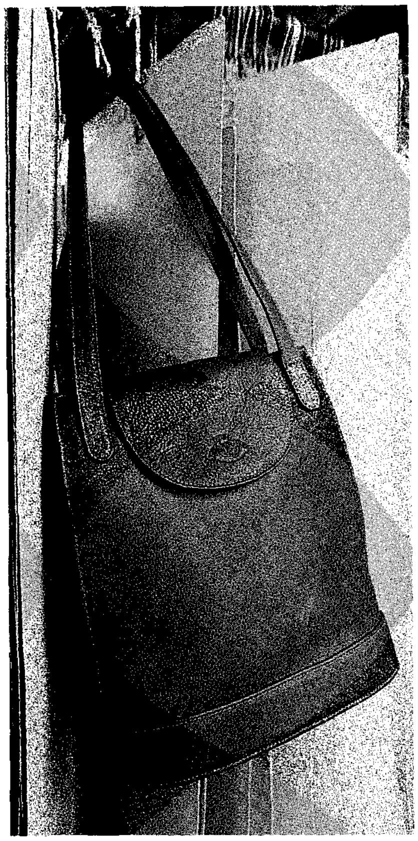

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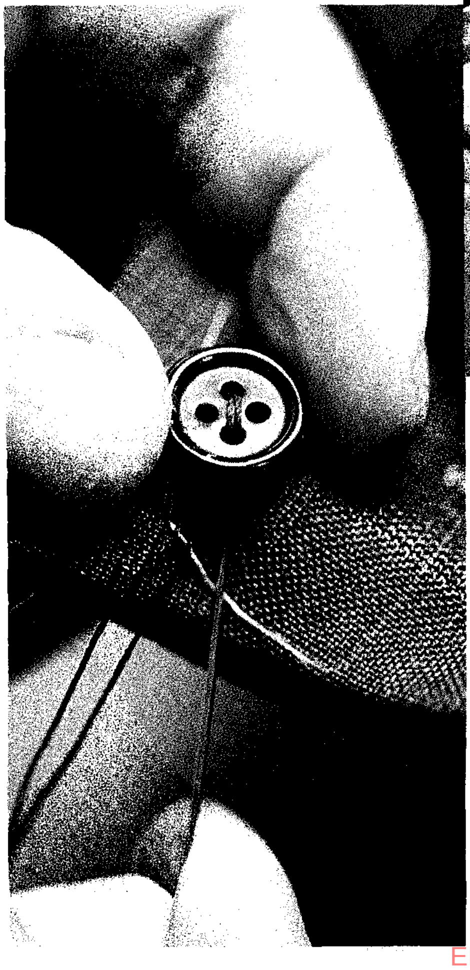

Above: **A hand-sewn leather tote bag from The Ghurka Collection by Marley Hodgson.**
Below: **All buttons are hand sewn to Brioni clothing, the final touch to a hand-tailored suit.**
Right: **Handwoven silk madras is a staple in the J. Press hand-sewn neckwear collections for spring.**

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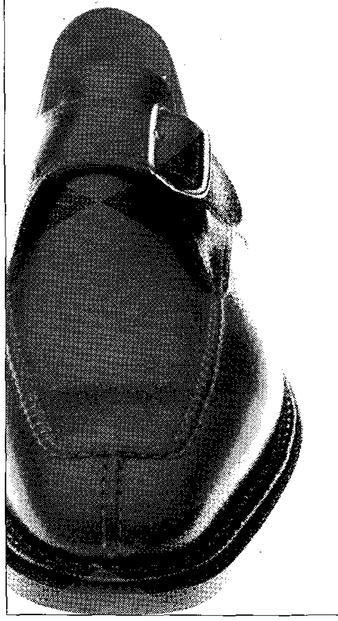

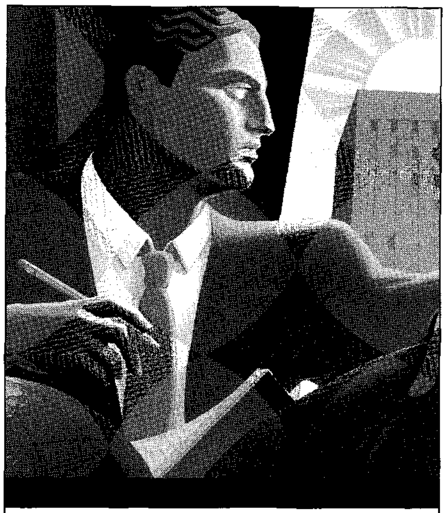

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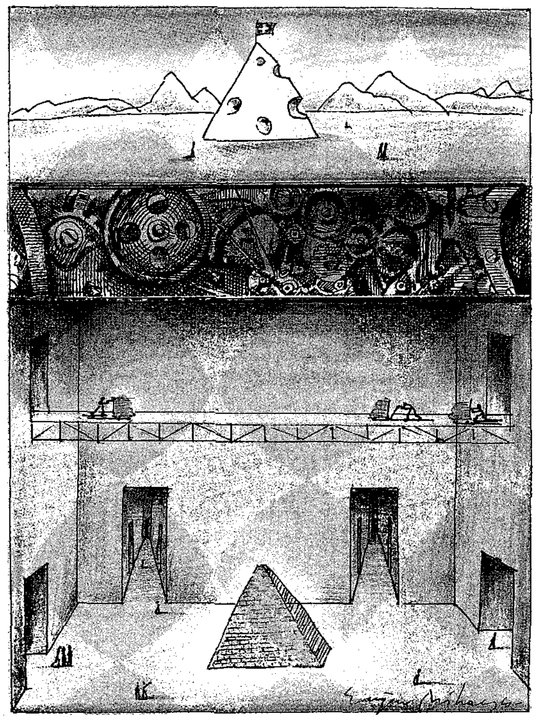
ANNALS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

MANNA FROM HELL

Nazi gold, Holocaust accounts, and what the Swiss must finally confront.

BY JANE KRAMER

THE story goes that, back in the days when the elders of Uri, Schwyz, and Unterwalden came down out of the mountains to found the country called Switzerland, some Uri traders, looking for a route to the St. Gotthard Pass and into Italy, decided to build a bridge over a deep gorge cut by the falls of the River Reuss, and, the job being humanly impossible, they made a pact with the Devil to get it done. The Devil, of course, named a price. His due was one Swiss soul, the soul of the first living creature to cross the bridge, and he would have claimed it, except that the Swiss were as crafty as the Devil had been obliging. They dispatched a billy goat instead, and, while the Devil was furious about the goat—he howled and raved and flung down a boulder that you can see today in the valley—the moral, as any Swiss child knows, is that the Swiss are special, the Swiss are spared. When the Swiss deal with the Devil, it is always someone else who pays.



EUGÈNE MIHAESCO

I sat in my room the other night—a pretty, *Swiss* sort of room in an old inn, near the Zurich Kunsthaus, where I have stayed for years—and typed some notes and discovered that in the course of a few days three bankers, two politicians, a psychoanalyst, a historian, a priest, and a stranger sitting beside me on the Geneva-to-Zurich train had told that story when I asked them to explain why, fifty-two years and a couple of generations after the end of the Second World War, the Swiss are so aggrieved at being held, finally, to account for the banking deals they struck with Hitler's Reich, and for the ones they failed to honor with the children of Hitler's victims. The Swiss are not easily accountable. They think of themselves as a "special case," an "exception"—the word in German is *Sonderfall*, and you hear it often here, especially now. They believe that the shrewd neutrality—they take it to be a pretty, *Swiss* sort of neutrality—that has kept them on top of some moral Alp, out of harm's way, has also kept them out of history's way. They believe so ardently, and so sincerely, that they have beat the Devil in the rest of us that after a few weeks' listening to them deconstruct the special case of Switzerland you begin to believe, with them, that it was God, not gold, that kept them exempt from the kind of loss and grief and violence that in this century overwhelmed their neighbors.

One reason the Swiss are aggrieved right now is that, with all their other problems—problems of unemployment, problems with exports, problems everyone in Europe has—God has left them and taken up with an unlikely American moralist named Alfonse D'Amato, who, for reasons of conscience or constituency or both, has accused them

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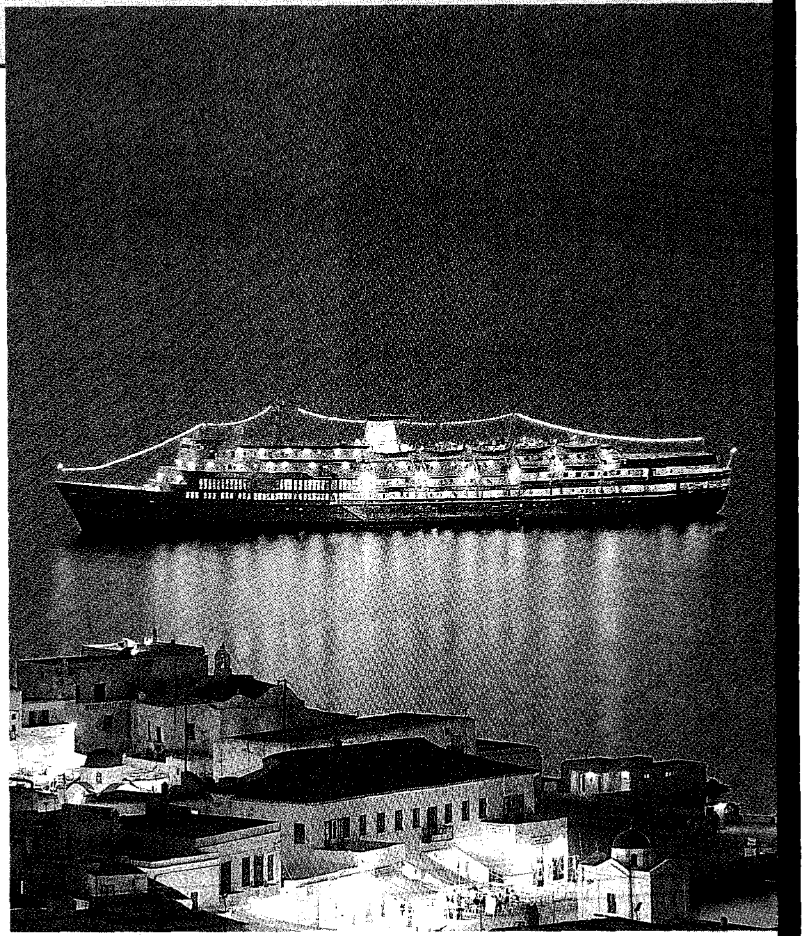

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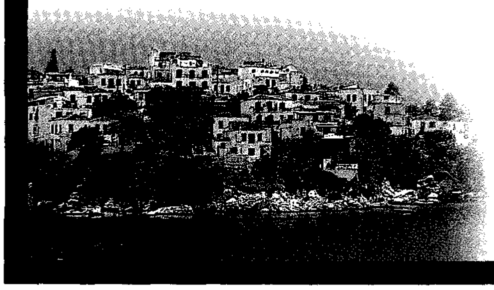

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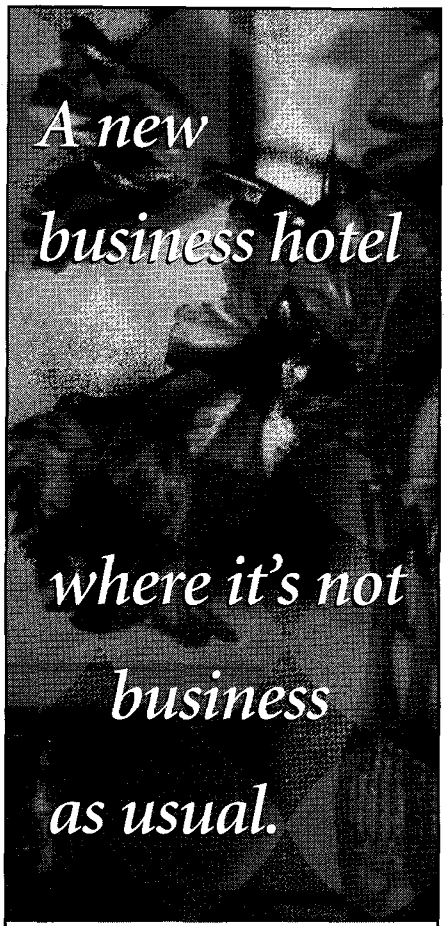

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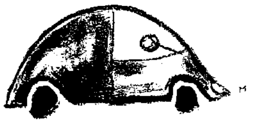
of what could be called "white-collar war crimes." It is a year since the Republican senator from New York started holding Senate Banking Committee hearings on the fate of wartime Jewish accounts—Holocaust accounts, people call them—in Swiss banks. He held one of them in New York, before a full complement of network cameras, and Elie Wiesel thanked him personally for his "sensitivity to Jewish pain." And while the Swiss are particularly fascinated by D'Amato ("Who is this D'Amato?" is the first question I was asked in Zurich), by now the accusations are anybody and everybody's game, and there are more of them every day.

The Swiss are accused of trafficking in gold looted by Hitler's occupying armies; of pocketing money left in Swiss banks by Jews destined for the camps; of conspiring with Nazi businessmen to launder Germany's foreign holdings through Swiss dummy companies; of turning Swiss factories into a German war machine; even of prolonging the war in Europe by providing Hitler with enough hard currency to continue fighting. All of this is, tragically, true, and none of it is news—not to anyone who stops to consider the price, to Switzerland, of its neutrality, or who remembers what the map of Europe looked like in the years when Switzerland was encircled by countries either fighting for Germany or occupied by Germany, or who even occasionally reads the paper. People have been talking about the provenance of Switzerland's gold reserves, and about the Jewish money that disappeared in its banks, ever since the war ended—beginning with the Allies, who first demanded an accounting, and now, finally, with the Swiss themselves.

It is illegal for any Swiss citizen to fight anywhere, in any war, even as a volunteer—except, of course, in Switzerland, for home and country. For a long time, this was convenient for everyone else in Europe, which is to say that Europe's rulers reasoned it was better for everyone to have access to Switzerland's Alpine passes than for any one side in a European war to control them. The Swiss had invented neutrality during the Thirty Years' War, and prospered mightily from the trade it brought them, but "perpetual neutrality" was something imposed on Switzerland by the Congress of Vienna in 1815, twelve years after Napoleon's troops left the Confederation. In the end, of course, it was neutrality that made Switzerland not only safe but "Switzerland," and, more to the point, kept it "Switzerland" during the First World War, when the country came close to fracturing, because of French Swiss who wanted to ally with France and Swiss Germans who wanted to fight for Germany. The First World War turned neutrality into one of the sacred Swiss givens—as particular and necessary to Switzerland as its Alps and its cowbells and its famous citizens' militia.

Hitler, of course, had plans for invading Switzerland if the Swiss were anything but neutral in the Second World War, but there was never a real possibility that Switzerland would join the Allies, or even could join them, and there was never a real doubt that a neutral Switzerland, with its banks and its factories and its passes, was more agreeable to the Germans than a Switzerland that would cost them time to occupy, money to maintain, and soldiers to police. There was never a doubt, either, that the Allies, faced with the prospect of an occupied Switzerland or a neutral Switzerland, had a keen interest in that neutrality. Switzerland in wartime was a place of paradoxical realpolitik: a place where the central banks' clearing house, called the Bank for International Settlements, had an American president and a man from the Reichsbank on the board; a place where Allen Dulles ran the Office of Strategic Services from a desk in Bern, and used the money America also made, buying gold from Switzerland, to help finance the French Resistance, while a few miles away Swiss factories were supplying the war matériel that helped to arm the Wehrmacht. Long after the Germans lost Stalingrad and the tide of the war turned, leaving the Swiss in no danger of invasion, Switzerland was still providing matériel to the Wehrmacht, and nobody said no. Everybody needed "Switzerland."

Switzerland began the war years as a poor country that listed "water" as its most important resource, and it ended those years intact and thriving, and became a rich country while the rest of Europe was recovering. Daniel Hofmann, a financial editor at the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, once told me that if the Swiss had offered to settle their accounts—monetary *and* moral—honestly at the end of the war "the effect on the economy here would have been negligible," which is to say that arguments here about banks and gold were never just about banks and gold. They were about the image of banks and gold in Switzerland, and as long as they were kept in the family they could be covered, like all Swiss arguments, by what Hofmann calls "the clean white snow blanket" of Swiss rectitude and Swiss safety. It is indisputably more agreeable to put your money with God's bankers than with, say, the bankers in Panama or Hong Kong, or on some Bahamian island whose only address is a mail drop. A third of the capital circulating in the world stops at a Swiss bank. The Swiss are wildly successful bankers, and the problems they are having now come at least in part from their behaving like bankers. They are rigid, they are greedy, and they are legalistically inhumane. They do not disclose anything until the law makes them disclose it, or part with cash until the law makes them part with it, or spend time and money looking into the provenance of deposits made fifty or sixty years ago (or, for that matter, yesterday) until they are faced with lawsuits or bans or boycotts or the kind of political pressure they were faced with this year in America. The Swiss banking secrecy law was written to make them happy. The Swiss government existed to keep them happy—something it accomplished for years with what the bureaucrats in Bern refer to proudly as "our foreign policy of no foreign policy." Wealth has been part of the snowcap-and-Alpenblume mythology, if not the theology, of the country since the day Ulrich Zwingli, the citizen-priest of the Zurich Reformation, stripped the Catholic statues of the Grossmünster of their gold and silver, melted it down, and turned over the treasure to the Zurich Town Council, converting art to capital, and anticipating Weber by nearly five hundred years.



By now, the Swiss—Catholic, Calvinist, or Zwingli's Church of Zurich—have all learned from Zwingli that they have a special destiny and that gold is part of that destiny and, in fact, an accurate reflection of their virtue. They know that they live off "manna from Hell"—a seventies Swiss comedian said this—but it has rarely disturbed them. Survival, for the Swiss, amounts to a sacred duty. Every Swiss citizen is required by law to have a bomb shelter or access to a shelter, and once, after a tour through the biggest shelter in Zurich, which can house ten thousand people and includes among its attractions a morgue and a police station complete with cells, I wrote that even most sober Swiss citizens seemed to share a vision of an Armageddon that they would sit out, underground, shooting anyone who came pounding on their thick steel doors. After a couple of weeks in Zurich now, I still believe it. The country exists to survive, and it is not surprising that its gnomes and its bankers consider themselves, first and foremost, the servants of that survival. It gives them a proprietary interest in the money they hold. I have always thought that, despite the Marcoses and the Duvaliers and the sheikhs and the shahs—not to mention the Goerings who stashed their money with the Swiss, too—the real laundering that goes on here has been the laundering of Switzerland, for the Swiss themselves.

IN 1994 in New York, Israel Singer, at the World Jewish Congress, read a Paul Erdman novel called "The Swiss Account" and promptly opened an investigation into what happened to the money that Holocaust victims had placed in Switzerland in the years after the Reichstag fire. In 1995, Edgar Bronfman, the W.J.C. president (and, not incidentally, the chairman of Seagram), flew to Bern to confront the Swiss Bankers Association, and came home angry and discovered Alfonse D'Amato. In 1996, D'Amato held his first hearings, and a New York lawyer named Edward Fagan filed a twenty-billion-dollar class-action suit in federal court on behalf of an Auschwitz survivor whose father, on his way to the camp, had whispered something to her about a Swiss bank—a suit that has now been joined by sixteen thousand people.

But in Switzerland the story really begins at home, this January, when a security guard working the afternoon shift at the headquarters of the Union Bank of Switzerland, on Zurich's Bahnhofstrasse, went down to the basement for a look around, discovered a cart full of old ledgers waiting beside a broken shredder belt, and walked out of the bank with two of the ledgers and fifty-nine pages torn out of a third ledger in a plastic shopping bag. The guard's name was Christoph Meili, and he was a born-again Christian who liked to tell people what he told me: that when he opened the ledgers, spread

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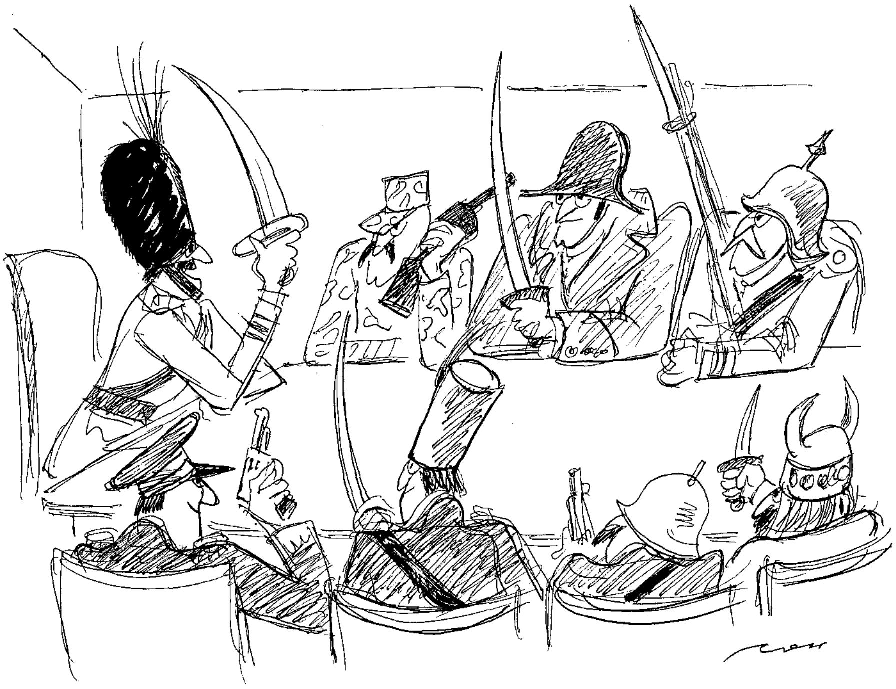
them out on the basement floor, and found, among other things, those fifty-nine pages—pages of property lists and title transfers involving an old Swiss bank called the Eidgenössische Bank, which was heavily invested in Germany and which U.B.S. had bought up after the war, and German industries like I. G. Farben, the chemical company that had supplied the gas to the death camps—he knew that "God expected me to do the right thing." Meili is twenty-nine, and until God talked to him he knew nothing about the war or about Jewish bank accounts or about the four hundred and twenty-five million dollars' worth of looted gold (more than four billion at today's prices) that the Swiss National Bank had obligingly bought from the Germans for hard currency, or laundered for the Germans, transforming the wealth of occupied Europe into proper, pure Swiss ingots, fit to be traded, fit to be sold in Portugal, fit to be stored in Bern in what is now the third-largest gold reserve in the world. Meili says that his Swiss-history lessons pretty much stopped at William Tell (who wasn't a Swiss at all but a character lifted from Norwegian legends). Meili came from a simple family, but not the kind of family the Swiss like to advertise on tourist posters. Meili's simple family had complicated domestic problems, and Meili himself had led what he calls "a chaotic life" until he overdosed on a meal cooked with marijuana and ended up "above my body"—which he says is where God found him. It was not the God that Zurich bankers mean when they say that God looks after the Swiss franc.

There were, of course, people who thought that Meili would be useful. The Swiss left counted on Meili as a hero, someone who would expose the oligarchy and help topple the banking-secrecy laws. The Swiss government counted on him as someone exportable, as the Good Swiss who could go to America and speak at synagogues and prove to everybody that the Swiss are not war criminals, that the Swiss are responsible. And the Swiss Jews counted on Meili, too, to show the world that it was not just Jews who were complaining. There are only eighteen thousand Jews in Switzerland now, and they live with a particular memory of the war. They live with the memory of sealed German trains carrying arms (and, it was rumored, troops) through Switzerland to Italy; of Jewish refugees weeping across the border; of two hundred Swiss burghers who exhorted Bern to be more "accommodating" to the realities of German power; of panic among ordinary Swiss people when Heinrich Rothmund (the head of the Swiss Federal Police and the man who asked the Germans to make his job easy by stamping a two-centimetre "J" in German-Jewish passports) warned them about the *Verjudung*—the "Jewification"—of the country. In other words, they live cautiously. They negotiate but



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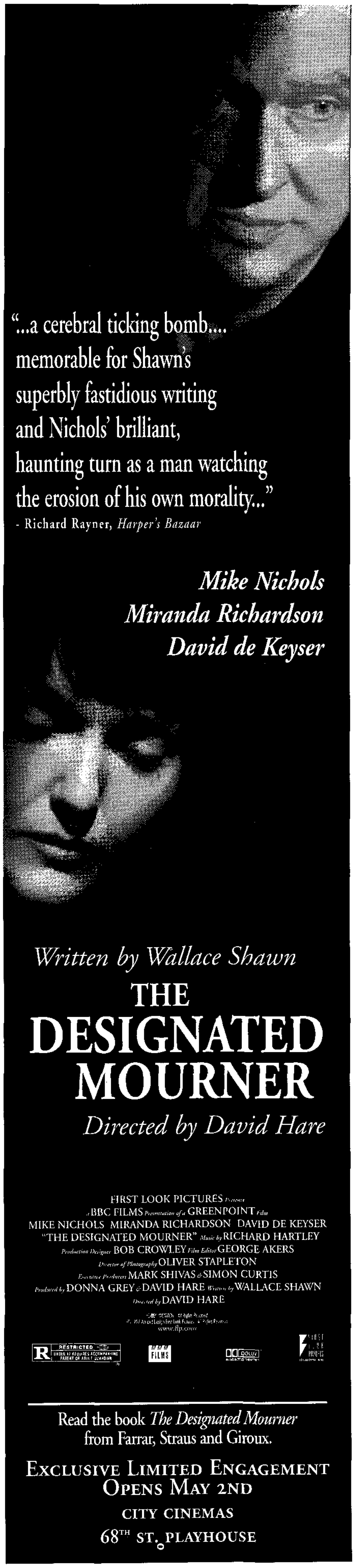

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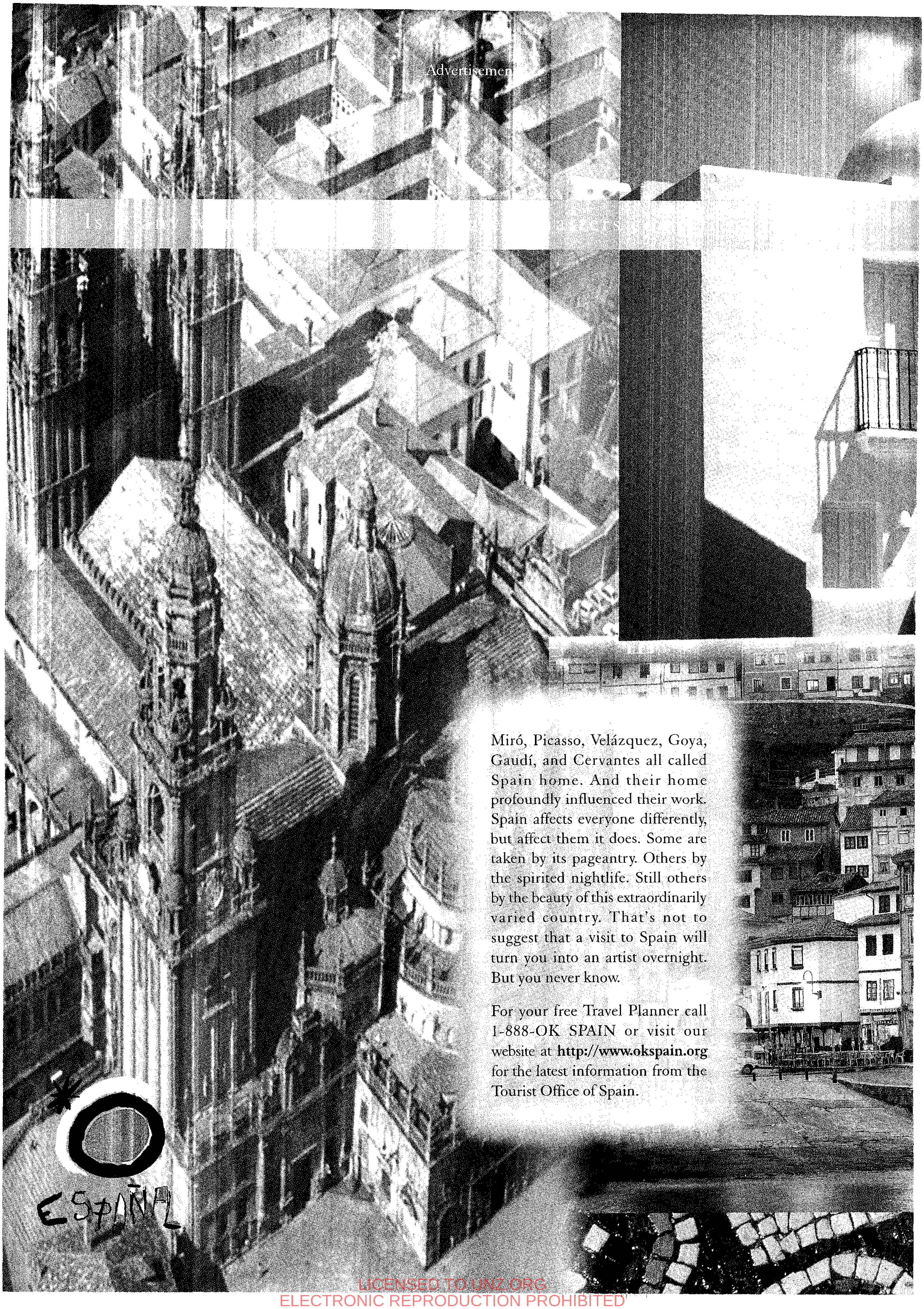

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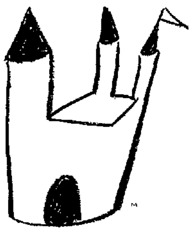
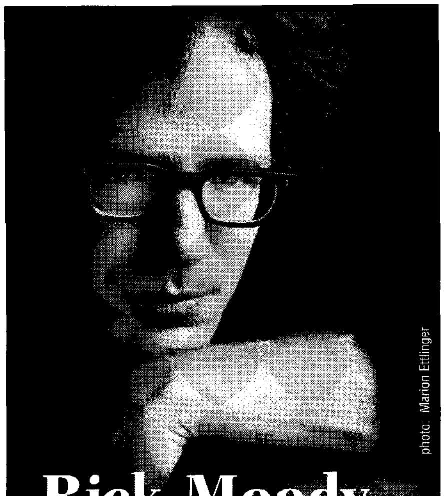
they do not demand. They do not like to attract attention, and they worry about the cost to them when rich foreign Jews like Edgar Bronfman, Jews with a strong sense of entitlement and, to their mind, no real experience of anti-Semitism, start shouting down the establishment here, demanding justice. "It's a Pyrrhic victory," an old Jewish community organizer named Sigi Feigel told me, a few days after Bern decided finally to reply to that demand and announced a government plan for a "solidarity foundation for victims of poverty and catastrophes, of genocide and other severe breaches of human rights such as, of course, victims of the Holocaust and of Shoah." Feigel said, "Now we'll have justice for the victims, and for the next hundred years we'll hear, 'You Jews! You blamed us!' " And so the Jews also counted on Meili to convince themselves that in Switzerland Jews and Christians got along, that they looked after each other—that Christoph Meili was "the Switzerland of the future." But Meili turned out to be as much of a problem for the Swiss as Al D'Amato, pulling in votes and leaking insulting letters to Zurich bankers, turned out to be for Bronfman—a problem of image, a problem of culture, a problem of attitude. And, in the end, Meili's only contact with anyone in any authority in Switzerland besides the police—who wanted to charge him with stealing bank secrets—was with a Swiss ambassador named Thomas Borer, who had just been handed the unenviable job of being the first crisis manager in his country's history.



At first, Meili had invitations from America. D'Amato asked him, and supposedly sent him a ticket. A synagogue in New York wrote to say that he was "always welcome." The B'nai B'rith said he was welcome, too, and gave him a menorah, and put up fifty thousand dollars to cover the legal fees he was sure to have. But Meili's new friends at the Hebrew Congregation of Zurich (where he had ended up depositing the U.B.S. ledgers) told him that it would "not be good" if he accepted any invitations, that he might say something that would stir up anti-Semitism at home, and by then those friends were about the only Swiss whom Meili trusted. He tried once anyway. He got on a plane to New York with his wife and children, and would have made it, except that the lawyer with the class-action suit against the Swiss banks happened to be on the plane with them, and "as a courtesy" called Meili's lawyer, back in Zurich, and the upshot was that Meili was on the next plane out to Switzerland and never even left the airport.

In the end, Meili suffered more than the bank he exposed. The bank saw to this, although it could be argued that the Union Bank of Switzerland would have done a lot more for its own image by treating him like a hero and giving him medals for saving such important documents—documents that, by the time he took them, were illegal to destroy. Rumors went around, and they ran a gamut: Meili was spying for Mossad; Meili had "problems"; Meili had once been "caught in the act" of pocketing a tea bag and a couple of sugar cubes from the staff kitchen. The chairman of U.B.S., Robert Studer, went on television one night to say that there were "motives" behind the Meili story, motives he was not at liberty to discuss. Meili was suspended by the security company with the U.B.S. contract. Then he was fired. Robert Holzach, who was the chairman of U.B.S. for eight years and sat on the board for thirty (and was admired in Zurich as the patron of the local James Joyce Foundation), explained it this way when I went to see him: "If he's watching your garden, and he takes the flowers—is this right?" As for the banker who sent the ledgers to the shredder, the bank let it be known that he was a brilliant young man who had been in a car crash and wasn't really responsible for his actions. No one thought to explain why a man like that had been put in charge of the archives of the biggest bank in Switzerland.

I HAVE always liked my illusions about Switzerland. I agree with my New York neighbor who read about the terrible things surfacing in Switzerland and took them to heart, took them personally, and said, "Oh, my God, what about Heidi? What about Le Rosey?" My husband went to school in Switzerland, and the stories he told me when we first met should have been instructive, because in Switzerland, ten years after the end of the war, he learned what children in Switzerland are still learning. He learned that it was the Swiss Army that had protected Switzerland and kept the Germans at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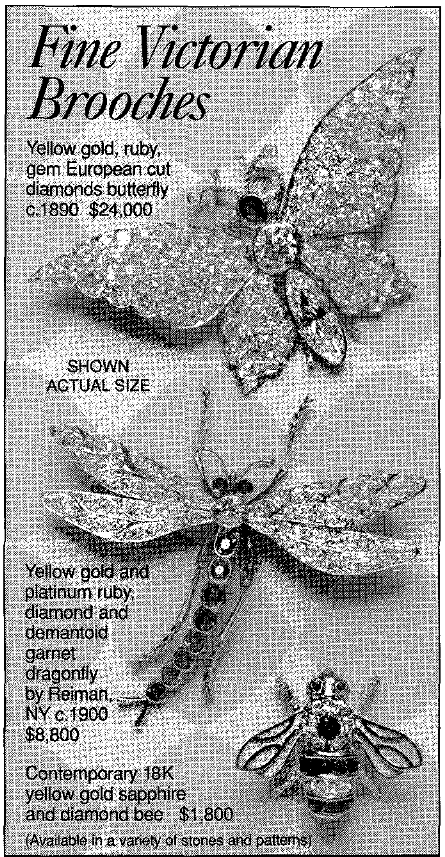

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bay. He learned that the Swiss had suffered terribly during the war, the way everyone else in Europe had suffered, because for several years of rationing they had had to eat potatoes—so many potatoes that by 1945 the housewives of Switzerland had mastered fifty-five different ways to cook a potato. (Today, people put the number of recipes at thirty.) He learned that the Swiss had been generous and kind in the war, taking in strangers, and he learned about the two hundred and fifty thousand foreigners whom the Swiss had sheltered, though he did not learn that most of those foreigners were deserters, who came toward the end of the war, when the Germans were in retreat; or that the twenty-two thousand Jewish refugees who managed to stay in Switzerland through the war were not allowed to work there; or that it was Switzerland's own Jews, and not its government, who had to raise the money to house and feed them; or that the refugees Switzerland did pay for were billed for their room and board as soon as the war was over. He learned (being at school in Geneva) that it was only Swiss Germans who had collaborated, the way I learned recently in Zurich that it was really the French Swiss—"Remember Vichy," Zurichers say—whose loyalties had been strained. But he did learn something, forty years ago in Geneva, that was pretty much truth unvarnished—or, rather, something so obvious that no one imagined it would trouble the conscience of an adolescent American boy: he learned from his history teacher that there were tons of Nazi gold in Switzerland's treasury and tens of thousands of unclaimed wartime accounts in Switzerland's banks. He learned that the Swiss were confident that all that gold and money would eventually disappear into "Switzerland," which was where it belonged.

In 1946, the Allies asked the Swiss government to account for the Nazi gold in its reserves. The Swiss came up with what at the time amounted to fifty-eight million dollars in bullion; the figure was ludicrous, but the Allies settled. In 1962, the Swiss banks were asked to account for the unclaimed Holocaust-victim money in *their* reserves, something the Israelis had been wanting them to do for years. This time, the Swiss Parliament told the banks to comply. It was a law, but not exactly an order, since there was no scrutiny of the banks and no one was punished for withholding information. It was more of an honor-system arrangement, and no one in banking was surprised when only twenty-three of the country's five hundred and forty banks bothered to reply at all, or when the ones that did reply reported a total of less than ten million Swiss francs, which at that time was worth about seven million dollars.

Hans Baer, of the Bank Julius Baer, which is one of the biggest private banks in Zurich and the only important Zurich bank founded by a Jewish family, says that when his people looked in their archives in 1962 they found about fifty thousand Swiss francs spread among twenty-five accounts. He has no doubt that a lot of banks lied in '62. He heard of one bank ordering seven thousand forms from the Swiss Bankers Association and never sending any back. But judging from what he found then he didn't think there was a fortune left—not, in any event, a traceable fortune—in any Swiss bank. He thought, for one thing, that the trustees and the lawyers who managed the important European Jewish fortunes would have been too sophisticated to leave their clients' money in a country that was likely to be encircled by German troops and subject to German occupation; they would have put it in London or New York. He thought that by the late thirties most of the money in the Holocaust accounts was money from ordinary Jewish families, families without much capital or much experience of the world, families who in their panic had found their way to a Swiss bank with a local branch or, before the border closed on them, to Switzerland itself. But the main reason bankers like Baer doubted there was much left in the Holocaust accounts was that so many convenient ways had existed for the money in those accounts to disappear: into the pockets of Swiss executors; into the pockets of accountants and bank-account managers and storefront trustees and Swiss friends with powers of attorney; into the pockets of Nazi agents who a few weeks into the Final Solution were said to be offering six months of a bank clerk's salary for access to those accounts; into the banks themselves, because a Swiss bank could absorb a lot of the money in a dormant account with management charges, or could stop investing that money, or even paying interest on it, on the ground that there were no instructions to the contrary from the client. But, of course, the bankers could not be sure, because in 1962 the government's order did not extend to accounts in corporate names, or to safe-deposit boxes. It targeted accounts with "Jewish" names—"Jewish names" was actually in the law—and since a lot of German-Jewish names are ordinary "German" names, it wasn't hard for the bankers to say they had looked and looked and hadn't found any Jewish clients.

Baer, who is known among Zurich liberals as one of the "good bankers"—meaning he is honest, compassionate, and worldly—opened his *Wall Street Journal* a couple of years ago to read about a woman in Israel who was complaining about his bank. She was trying to trace an account that her father, whose name was Moses Blum, had opened with the Bank Julius Baer in 1938, before he was sent to Dachau; she claimed that when she wrote to the bank, and paid her hundred-franc search fee, the bank replied with a testy note, saying that it had made a ten-year search—technically, under Swiss law, files more than ten years old can be destroyed—and found no records, and that the matter was closed. Baer demanded the records notwithstanding. He says they were on his desk in ten minutes. He also says that, happily, the story was false. Moses Blum had survived Dachau; he had opened his account at Baer in the nineteen-fifties, not in 1938; his widow had closed the account in the nineteen-seventies; and the daughter had died by the time the *Journal* wrote the story. But the paper was right about one thing—the letter the bank had sent her. Baer says that as soon as he saw the letter he thought, If *we* write these letters, what are the other banks writing? How are the other banks behaving? What are the other banks saying? What they were saying, in fact, was worse than even Baer suspected. They were telling survivors whose parents had died in Auschwitz to come back with "death certificates" or "proof of burial." They were offering Edgar Bronfman a package deal of thirty-two million dollars to stop investigating and make the survivors go away. Within a month this winter, the outgoing Swiss President had referred to the Jewish claims for billions of dollars as "nothing less than extortion and blackmail," and the Swiss Ambassador in Washington had sent a cable to his home office, which was promptly leaked, referring to Switzerland's problems with America as "a war which Switzerland must conduct on the foreign and domestic front, and win."

THERE has always been another Switzerland. The Swiss imported it. Goethe, Rilke, and Casanova came to write in Zurich. Lenin had a pass to the Zurich Municipal Library stacks. Visiting students plotted revolutions in art and politics in the city's *Konditorei*, and in a famous "socialist cafeteria" on the Werdplatz, and in an old bookstore on the Froschaugasse where generations of Marxists and Trotskyites and anarchists left their tracts and their speeches. All Zurich asked of them was that whatever seditious or delicious thoughts they nurtured in the fugitive peace of the city be taken away quietly, exported like clocks or chocolates. But some of those thoughts remained, and eventually a community of Zurich radicals formed around a small group of well-known wartime Swiss intellectuals—among them the psychoanalyst Paul Parin and the writer Laure Wyss. One of the radicals was a journalist named Niklaus Meienberg, who was famously, vitriolically obsessed with exposing the truths of Swiss collaboration. (He began to see Nazis in every respectable Swiss corner, and died, four years ago, with his head in a plastic bag.) The first Swiss movie I ever saw was a movie that Meienberg wrote, about a young soldier from Saint Gall called Ernst S., who was shot as a traitor by his treacherous generals. The next movie was Markus Imhoof's "The Boat Is Full," about the Jewish refugees who were turned back at the Swiss border—forty thousand refugees in all. For fifteen years, the kiosks in Zurich have been selling a radical weekly paper called *WochenZeitung*. (One of the editors, a writer from Turgau named Stefan Keller, whom Meienberg brought to Zurich, just published a manifesto against the banks and the government which nearly four thousand people asked to sign.) And for at least ten years the bookshops here have been full of books about Swiss banks and Holocaust money and Nazi gold—books like "The Third Reich in Switzerland" and "Switzerland and the Jews"—and the books were read and reviewed and a few of them caused minor scandals, but always, until now, as the Swiss say, "scandals within the family."

The scholars who wrote those books had worked for years in nearly impossible circumstances. Most of the information

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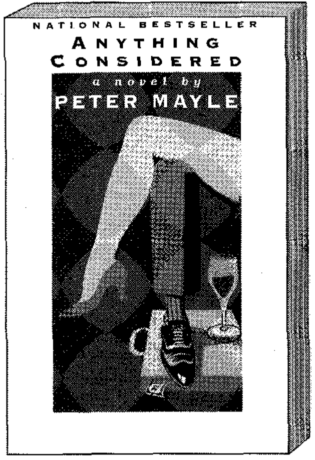

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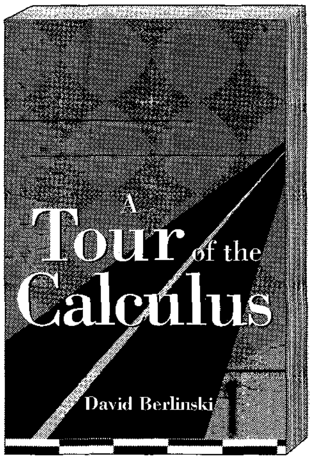
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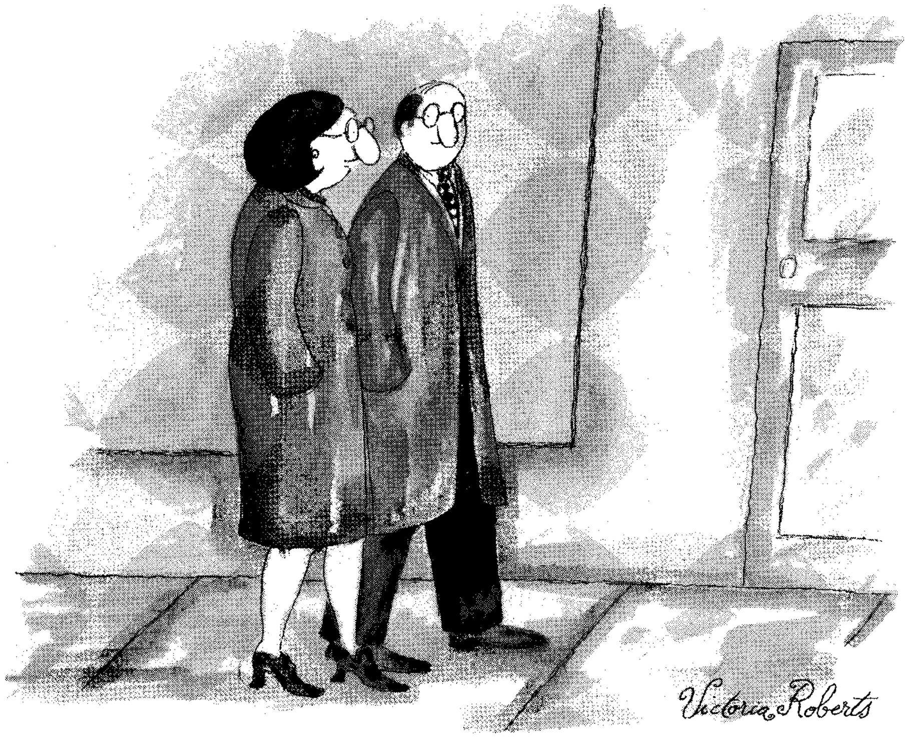

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they wanted was sealed. They had no government support, no freedom-of-information act, and therefore no recourse in the Swiss courts—and certainly no way to stage a *coup monté*, as Bronfman did, or commandeer a government hearing, like D'Amato. At first, they welcomed the attention from America. ("I don't care who this D'Amato is, I say hooray for D'Amato!" Laure Wyss, at eighty-three, told me.) Now they wonder what is behind the attention. They suspect that Washington's new interest in their old news has less to do with Jewish victims than with Washington's own campaign to get the Swiss banking-secrecy laws lifted and be able to poke around in Swiss banks for the Mafia money and the Medellín money that it knows is hidden here. They have tried to tell Americans that Swiss neutrality was really a collusion. They point out details that Americans tend to ignore: the fact that up to a few months before Pearl Harbor, Washington did nothing to freeze the American properties of a Swiss holding company called Interhandel, which was said to have important American investors, and which was well known as a laundered portfolio of I. G. Farben's foreign assets; the fact that Portugal also bought Nazi gold, and that Sweden bought gold, and that Spain, which is said to have bought a hundred million dollars' worth of Nazi gold, settled its accounts with the Allies with only a hundred thousand dollars, and nobody today seems to care. They know that until the World Jewish Congress decided to out the Swiss, the West was serenely uninterested in any evidence they had to offer, and it is hard for them now when American researchers take credit for uncovering "new evidence" that was common knowledge here—the origin of the "J" on the German-Jewish passports is a case in point—or when a right-wing politician like D'Amato discovers Swiss banking twenty years after Jean Ziegler, the Swiss sociologist, wrote a landmark book called "Switzerland: The Awful Truth" (and Harper & Row published it in English).

Most Swiss had never even heard of "spin doctors" or "damage control" until this winter, and, if they had, they thought of them as something American, something unnecessary and even inappropriate in a country with "no foreign policy" and therefore no damage to consider. The politicians here handled their first real war of words with the real world not so much like criminals as like amateurs. Now they are learning. They use the word "international." They have named a "committee of eminent persons," Hans Baer among them, to look into the matter of Holocaust accounts, and they like to point out that it is an "international" committee and that Paul Volcker is the chairman. They are eager to tell you that Thomas Borer, at their task force, has an American fiancée, who was once Miss Texas. They want you to know that four of the eight historians who are going to write an official report on Switzerland's wartime history are foreign historians, including Sybil Milton, at the Holocaust Museum in Washington, and Saul Friedländer, in Jerusalem. They have never invited foreigners to tell the Swiss about Switzerland before; they have never even let foreigners into most of their archives. Now the archives are open, and the lists of Holocaust accounts will eventually be open, too, because the government has ordered its first accounting since 1962. And while the deal that Bern forced on the country's bankers is not likely to cost those bankers any sleep—they are not yet required to look at passbooks issued to code names or made out "to bearer"; they are not required to open the accounts of wartime estate trustees or power-of-attorney records; they are not even required to explain what "dormant account" means in a country where, by law, accounts are active in perpetuity—the bankers are scared and they are scrambling.

This winter, the three big public banks—Crédit Suisse, the Union Bank of Switzerland, and the Swiss Bank Corporation—and some of the private banks put a total of a hundred and twenty million Swiss francs into a compensation fund. Then Swiss industry added twenty-five million francs to the fund, because people had begun asking how, in the thirties and forties, Swiss businessmen were able to buy up Jewish factories, across the border in Germany, for a symbolic Swiss franc, and why they were using slave labor from concentration camps in those factories. (It is already well known here that Bally was a small family company when it took over a couple of expropriated German-Jewish shoe factories, and that the father of Switzerland's current finance minister got rich on an expropriated cigar business.) In another few weeks, the big Swiss insurance companies, which had already put twenty million francs into the fund, will probably kick in more, because now people are asking about them—about how many Jews

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bought policies on their own lives, and who the beneficiaries were, and what the insurance companies did with those policies once the premiums stopped coming in, because the policyholders were dying in Auschwitz, or were dead already.

THE other day, looking through files, I found the catalogue of an exhibit of schoolchildren's drawings I once saw at the Zurich civil-defense-demonstration shelter—drawings of families playing together in their shelters while enemy planes drop hydrogen bombs on their houses, drawings of mushroom clouds exploding in the distance while the city sleeps, peaceful and secure and underground. Now I am curious about whether the exhibit is still up, and about who put it together, and about whether the Swiss, among their elusive archives, might have an archive of children's drawings like the ones I saw, because I want to know what Swiss children used to draw in 1940, when the Swiss were digging holes in the Alps, and building the fortifications that were their first shelters against a war-torn world. The Swiss had a battle plan—they called it the Redoubt. In the event of a German invasion, they were going to pull back from their borders and cede their lowlands and fight from those big holes. They were determined to save the Switzerland of the Alps, the mythic Switzerland, the way they had saved it from the Hapsburgs in the fourteenth century. One of the results of the Redoubt was that two-thirds of the men in the Swiss militia were freed from border duty, and many of those men went to work in factories like Zurich's Oerlikon Bührle, producing the anti-aircraft guns and the aluminum that eventually found their way to Germany. Swiss history is made up of ironies like this, though irony is not notably a Swiss specialty. It has been the job of countless Swiss governments to assure their citizens that they are entirely, virtuously peaceful and at the same time fiercely, victoriously brave.

There is a memorial on the outskirts of Zurich to the soldiers of Switzerland. It is a place where old men like to take their grandchildren, and when the grandchildren remind them that Swiss soldiers haven't died in a war for centuries the grandfathers tell them that it is a matter of definition—that in 1918 there were many soldiers who "fell" from influenza, inside Switzerland, defending Swiss neutrality. I have always liked that memorial. It is one of those paradigmatic Swiss symbols, up there with the bridge over the River Reuss, because it has to do with longing, and with denial. A banker I know, at the Vontobel Bank, told me that to his mind the anguish in Switzerland today has precisely to do with this sort of longing and denial. He said that the country had been able to justify its famous "remove" as long as the countries surrounding it were demonstrably barbaric and autocratic, but that now "the rest of Europe is just like us"—he meant high-minded and democratic—and the Swiss must know, at some level, that their neutrality and their "no foreign policy" and everything else that made them a *Sonderfall* are obsolete. A lot of younger Swiss are beginning to think that neutrality was always a fraud—that, however much the Swiss were forced by geography to traffic with the Third Reich, it is shaming to say that Switzerland was "neutral" simply because it sent no soldiers into battle.

I saw a television program last month in Geneva—a program about Switzerland and the war called "L'Honneur Perdu de la Suisse"—and one of the most wrenching segments had to do with an old Swiss doctor who broke down as he described being sent with a German division on a "neutral" medical mission to the Russian front. He said that he and the other Swiss doctors on the mission were not allowed to treat any of the wounded Russian soldiers, only the German soldiers. The Germans lined up their Russian prisoners and hanged them, and when hanging became too slow they began shooting them in the neck. That was all the doctor remembered, because after the first few shootings he fainted. His story reminded me of the fact that Bern, to this day, refuses to lift its official condemnation of the Swiss doctors who went to republican Spain, and that well into the nineteen-forties doctors who wanted to set up field surgeries for the Allies had to smuggle themselves out of Switzerland like contraband. There are a lot of young Swiss now who think the country would be much healthier if it acknowledged what one Swiss student called its "strong incapacity" to understand the valor or the commitment of people who did fight for a cause. Roger de Weck, the young editor of the *Tages-Anzeiger*—and, incidentally, the son of the former chairman of U.B.S.—says, "I would go further. I would say that neutrality is bad for the character of a people.” He was talking, of course, about Switzerland and the gold and the Second World War. He had a list of commitments that would make Switzerland “normal,” and other Swiss liberals I met had pretty much the same list: a commitment to Europe; a commitment to the United Nations; a commitment to the reform of Switzerland’s lumbering “direct democracy,” with its raised-hands-and-referendum folklore; and, maybe more than anything else, a commitment to the demystification of Swiss history, including the history of anti-Semitism in a country that for centuries had only two “Jewish villages,” in the Aargau, where Jews were permitted to live, and that only gave civil rights to Jews in 1866, after the French complained that their own Jewish businessmen had nowhere to stay or to open offices in Geneva.

It may be simply a matter of generation, since a lot of old Swiss bankers and businessmen seem to believe in the efficacy of what de Weck calls “the Swiss practice of threatening Jews with anti-Semitism” to keep them from complaining. One old banker here told me to think of Swiss anti-Semitism this way: “It’s not a dormant account,” he said. “It’s a dormant feeling.” He thought that maybe it had to do with “the old times, when the cattle dealers were mainly Jews.” He told me, “No one likes cattle dealers,” and with that he pretty much summed up the rest of his conversation. Robert Holzach, at U.B.S., wanted to reassure me that with one possible exception there were no Jews “at the top” in any of the three great public banks. He said that the banking scandal was really a war. It had to do with a Jewish conspiracy to take over the world’s “prestige financial markets,” something he told me is already happening in New York, London, and “even Frankfurt.” He is right about one thing. “Nazi gold” and “dormant accounts” are really tropes in Switzerland. They stand for the *Sonderfall*. What Switzerland had was gold: the franc was backed by gold; the *Sonderfall* was backed by gold.

RIGHT now, the gold reserve at the National Bank of Switzerland has a market value of nearly thirty-two billion dollars, and is officially valued at not much more than a quarter of its worth. When the government first talked about a “solidarity foundation”—the idea came from the president of the bank, Hans Meyer—the plan was to start selling four hundred tons of that reserve at sixty per cent of its market value, and to use some of the profit as the foundation’s working capital. Meyer described the interest on five billion dollars to me as “the moral value of fifty francs for every Swiss citizen,” which is not really a lot of money, if you stop to consider that half of it is going to be spent in Switzerland anyway, and that the other half won’t amount to very much more than what the government is about to seize from Raul Salinas’s Swiss bank accounts. Sometime over the next year, there will be a referendum on that fifty francs of moral value, but even now, after all the shame and all the scandal, it is not entirely evident that the Swiss will vote yes—if for no other reason than that it inevitably takes more than one vote on any issue for the Swiss to change. Some people are already organizing to block the foundation; they say that selling Swiss gold is like “selling Switzerland,” and in this they follow a right-wing populist politician and businessman, Christoph Blocher, who has cornered the European market in something I heard called “airbag detonators” but who nevertheless counts among his antipathies the European Union, NATO, the United Nations, immigrants, and anything else that threatens to end Switzerland’s neutrality or its *Sonderfall* or its psychic isolation. But Switzerland is changing. Women vote. Kids demonstrate against the Army. And now ordinary Swiss citizens are talking about a “Swiss identity crisis,” acknowledging for the first time that some of the ugly truths that have emerged in the last few years, and the anguish that has surfaced, have a lot to do with the fact that, unlike Germans, they, as Swiss, never even had to pretend to acknowledge their past. They know that the arguments in Bern about looted gold and Switzerland’s debts to the countries that owned that gold are really the same arguments their bankers are having with Jewish survivors, arguments about how to settle the current “value” of accounts that date from before the Holocaust. Some of the bankers, as a rule of thumb, are offering ten times the original deposits, and some of the survivors, Sigi Feigel tells me, are claiming as much as a hundred times, but it all comes down to the same few questions: How do you put a price on a human life? When do you simply have to stop and look at yourself and do something? ♦

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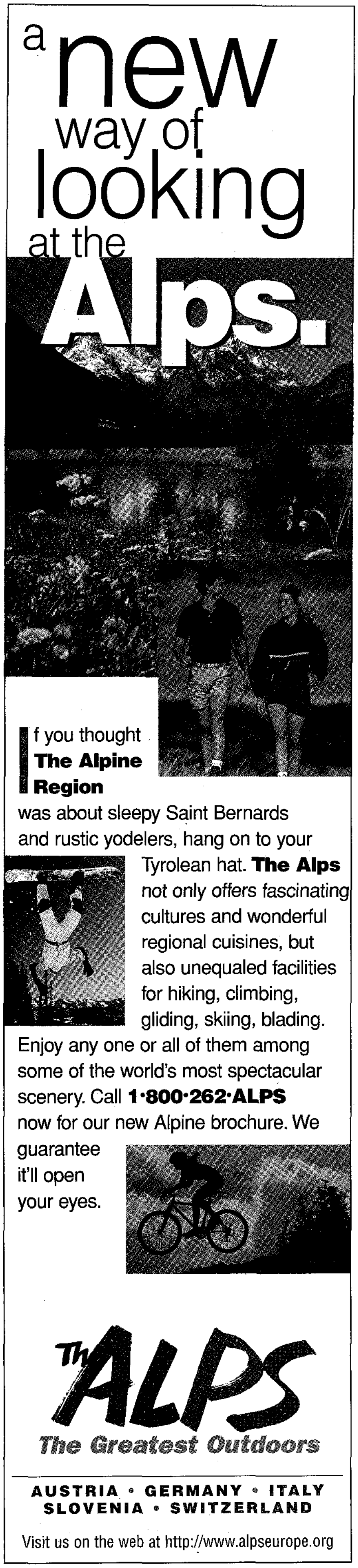

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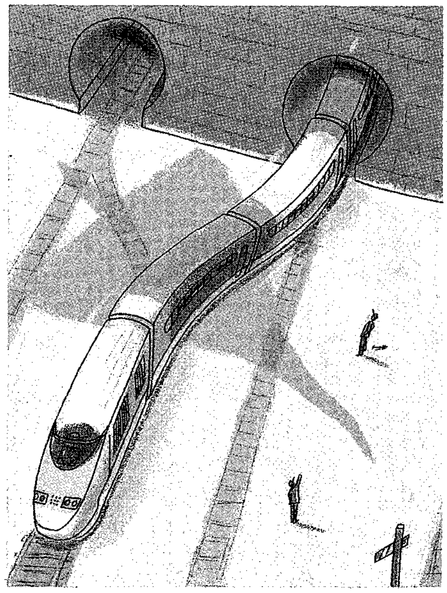
DEPT. OF DREAMS

EUROPEAN SOLUTIONS TO TRAVEL

Is the Channel Tunnel a feat of genius—proof, like the Concorde, that Europeans can work together? Or is it, like the Concorde, a financial folly?

BY JULIAN BARNES

On a speeding cross-Channel train, a Frenchman of Foreign Legion appearance (cropped hair, mild scowl, farouche features) is quietly philosophizing to himself. "*Dans l'Eurostar, j'ai la liberté de bouger,*" he begins, then civilly translates for us. "On the Eurostar, I 'ave the fridom to move, to theenk, to work"—pause for expansive inhalation—"to *breathe.*" Cut to other passengers working, possibly thinking, certainly breathing. The suave roughneck dips into his own language again, before holding up to us an example of his ferrovial theenking: "And so I 'ave to ask myself, Does a bird in a cage sing as sweetly as a bird who is free?" The *pensée* draws from a dapper English businessman in a nearby seat a glance of skeptical amusement.



The lesson of the Tunnel and the Concorde is that great failures are actually radical successes.

TOBY MORRISON

The Eurotraveller in the TV ad is the French soccer star Eric Cantona, who currently plays for Manchester United and is probably the best-known French person in Britain. The loose seductiveness of his fame no doubt dissuades viewers from asking normal logical questions (like how does a footballer "work" on the Eurostar?); in any case, British skepticism has been undercut in advance by that eyebrow-raising compatriot. More to the point is the audacity of approach, the way the ad half satirizes, half celebrates an entrenched Anglo-Saxon view of the French as poetical moodsters invented for the purpose of tolerant mockery by British pragmatists. It is a sophisticated selling line, involving a level of self-mockery from the protagonist. It also invites the risky inference: take our train if you want to hear a whole nationful of such froggy twaddle.

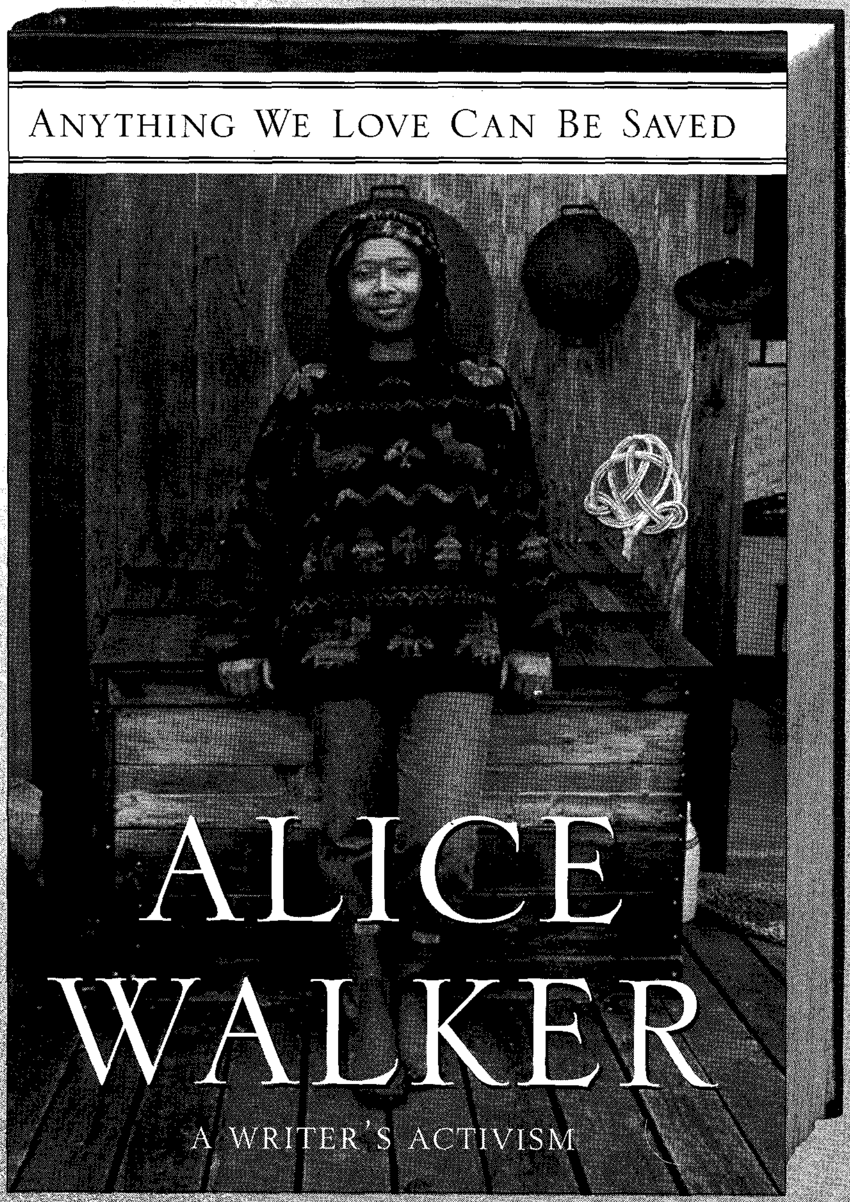
The ad's central neutrality, or evasiveness—are the French stylish artists, pretentious oafs, knowingly both, or unknowingly both?—is well pitched for the present moment. Britain is running toward an election in which the two main parties are indistinguishable on most major issues; Europe is one of the few that divide them. The Labour Party (having in the postwar decades been anti-, pro-, and anti-again) is now pro-Europe; the Conservatives (who took Britain into what was then the Common Market) are going through a skeptical phase. Do we believe in economic and monetary union, a common currency, a shared foreign policy, expansion of the European Union eastward? Can we trust Johnny Foreigner not to steal our wallet and generally do us down? The body politic's nervous system is well known to Tory Euroskeptics: press lightly here and the patient yelps. They know that Otherness begins at Calais, and the epitome of the Other is French.

And yet this train on which Cantona the arch-foreigner sits was developed jointly by the French and the British. It is operated by both French and British crews. It goes through a tunnel, bored from one end by the British and from the other by the French, which put an end to centuries of subaqueous dreaming and changed the geography of Europe. For

FROM THE BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *THE COLOR PURPLE* AND *IN SEARCH OF OUR MOTHERS' GARDENS*

"There is always a moment in any kind of struggle when one feels in full bloom. Vivid. Alive. One might be blown to bits in such a moment, and still be at peace....To be such a person or to witness anyone at this moment of transcendent presence is to know that what is human is linked, by a daring compassion, to what is divine."

— ALICE WALKER



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those who live in southern England, Paris has become nearer than Edinburgh, Brussels nearer than Glasgow. The tunnel abolishes the Channel symbolically and actually: you get no glimpse of the sea as you pass between what could be two separate sections of the same landmass.

Twenty years previously, the geography (or at least the breadth) of the Atlantic crossing was altered by another high-profile, high-tech Anglo-French collaboration: the Concorde. As Europe prepares to move closer, and as Britain continues to stand aloof, Europhiles might offer up such projects as the shape of things to come, proof that fraternity is for the good of all. Euroskeptics could argue that the two projects were in fact deep eccentricities, the result of an unlikely coincidence of political will and financial hopefulness.

What neither side would deny is the general affection in which each of these systems is now held. Concorde is the glittering loss leader (technically it makes a profit, but we'll come to that) in the operations of British Airways and Air France. For two decades, it has made elegant passes over sports grounds where international matches are being played, like an aerial cheerleader. Steerage passengers in 747s gaze unenviously as they rumble past a dormant Concorde on the Heathrow tarmac, knowing that in an hour or two it will stir its wings and whip past them somewhere over the Atlantic at twice their height and twice their speed. As for the Eurostar, which began service in November, 1994, it has already become a regular feature of cross-Channel commuting life, celebrated by its Paris-for-lunchers, its Heathrowphobic Tunnelphiles. The current journalistic fantasy that London is once again the hot capital of Europe includes, in its French deployment, the detail that Parisians who are young and *branchés* joyfully hop on the Eurostar at the Gare du Nord to come clubbing in the reawakened city.

The affection is the more surprising—in nostalgia-ridden, heritage-obsessed Britain, at least—because it is directed at an example of advanced technology, at glossy machines that refer insistently to now and to a version of the future. There are, of course, alternative ways of spending more money than is strictly necessary on trains and planes: you can take Art Deco boneshakers across the railway tracks of Europe, India, America; you can hop over bits of Africa in a flying boat; soon, no doubt, zeppelins will be back. You can dress for dinner and listen to a tinkly pianist while smoking your low-tar cigarette through a tortoiseshell holder; you can order a White Lady from a barman who will have to look it up in a book. You can have such willed antiquarianism, if you choose. But more people, gratifyingly, prefer the thrill of seeing the best of modern technology at full thrum: the moment when the machometer clicks up to 2.00; the announcement from the *chef de train*, somewhere between Calais and Paris, that the maximum speed of three hundred kilometres per hour has been attained.

CONCORDE also has a serious lesson for the Channel Tunnel and its transport functions (passenger train, car shuttle, and freight conveyor): keep your droop nose clean for twenty years or so and you will come to be appreciated for

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yourself; bad memories of political, financial, and environmental rancor will simply be vaporized. The fact that the Concorde remains in regular service is astonishing if you consider its over-all failure as a project; the fact that there is even talk of a successor, a second-generation supersonic airliner able to carry two to three times as many passengers six thousand or so miles without refuelling—and the fact that the Europeans are anxious about an American (or, more sinister, Russo-American) venture's already having the developmental edge—seems like a historical loop-the-loop. A decade or more ago, Concorde was widely viewed as an object lesson in planning failure, an example of what happens when political vanity schmoozes with technological phantasmagoria to the disregard of market realities. Concorde was then a heroic debacle, an albatross, a white elephant, an infallible system for acquiring and accumulating debt. Now it has risen above its past, cruising in the higher atmospheric layers of myth.

"I like Europe. They're not afraid of a few germs."

• •

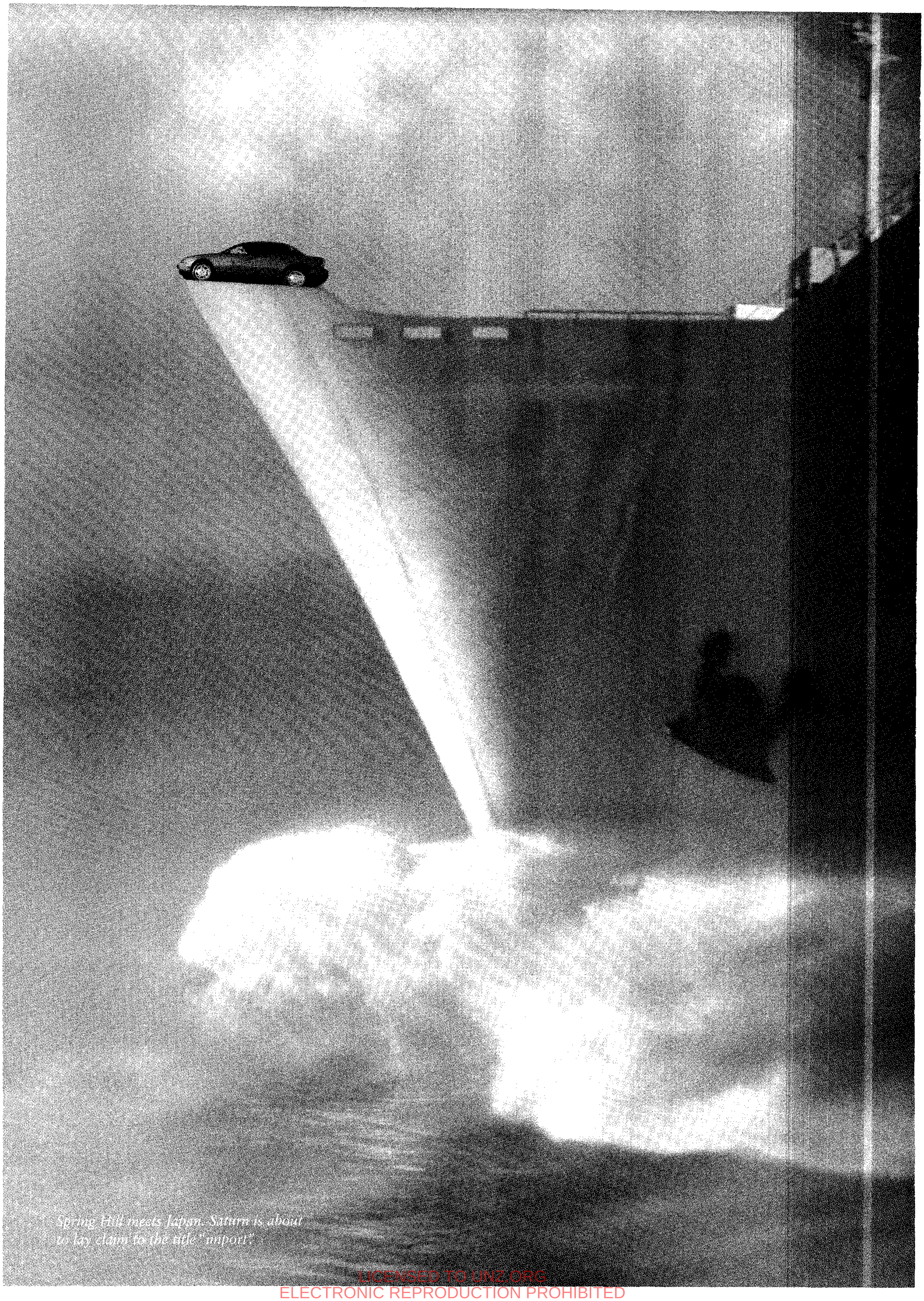
Such belated success retrospectively regilds the concept of Anglo-French collaboration. Yet the beginnings of the project, in a 1962 treaty, were marked not just by normal self-interest but by active mutual distrust. Everyone wanted something from it other than just to build a fast airplane. The British Foreign Office saw Concorde as a means of easing Britain into the Common Market despite de Gaulle's Francocentric objections. De Gaulle, for his part, regarded the project as a way of challenging American hegemony in the skies. Both sides wanted to compete against America's planned supersonic transport. Everyone—except for a few environmentalists and *raisonneurs*—had a technological hard-on.

The psychodynamics of that forgotten 1962 treaty (which was laid before neither national parliament) are revealed in a single key element: there was no provision for either party to withdraw. The French distrusted the Anglo-American connection, while the British didn't want the French coming on board just long enough to steal their secrets. (In fact, what happened was that the Russians stole our joint secrets and used them to speed-develop their own supersonic Tu-144.) Both sides wanted on several occasions to get out of this loosely costed, constantly escalating project, but by then neither could afford to: the defaulting party might well end up having to repay the other party's entire development costs.

According to one authority, the British tried to withdraw on four occasions, the French on three. All seven attempts failed. It cost too much to stay in; but then it would cost even more to get out. At first, the British preferred to cancel military planes instead; by 1970, they found themselves in a position where abandoning Concorde would have put a quarter of the domestic aircraft industry out of work. One of the sumptuous ironies of Concorde's development was that on key occasions the future of this "jet-set plaything," as it was described by opponents at the time, was secured after intervention by two of the most supposedly left-wing figures in European politics. In 1974, both the British and the French were keen to cancel. In Britain, the new Secretary of State for Industry was the leading *gauchiste* Anthony Wedgwood Benn, who had more than twenty thousand Concorde workers in his Bristol constituency; understandably, if solipsistically, he told the House of Commons that it would be a "national disaster" if the project failed. When President Pompidou's government wanted out, it was opposed by the French Communist Party, which even threatened to seek Moscow's help in keeping Concorde alive; the Party leader, Georges Marchais, roundly declared that cancellation was "inadmissible."

So a forced and bickering march proceeded to build an airplane that, in the end, nobody wanted, not even the French and British flag carriers. Seventy-four options had been bought by interested airlines (Pan Am was the very first to put in for six of the initial batch of eighteen); but by the time Concorde was ready to enter service every single one of them had been dropped. The two governments, in an informal act of political collaboration, forced their national airlines to fly the plane. The airlines, in return, forced the governments to pick up the bill. The last three Concordes delivered to Air France came with a nominal invoice for three francs. The plane, as Elliot J. Feldman put it in "Concorde and Dissent," "never had a single willing customer."

As for the hope that aeronautical fraternity would lead to closer partnership



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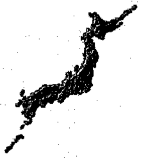

With 125 million people packed onto an island, room is not something folks in Japan have a lot of. Needless to say, there are some pretty tight squeezes passing as parking spaces. We've been told our dent-resistant bodyside panels will be most appreciated. Although it sure sounds like our interiors will be the biggest selling point. Literally.

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THE 1997 SATURN SL2

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Understandably, everyone in Spring Hill is pretty excited with the idea of Saturns going to Japan. Or, as somebody over in Cockpit Assembly put it, "It's going to be a great feeling knowing those ships are going back to Japan loaded, instead of empty." Amen.

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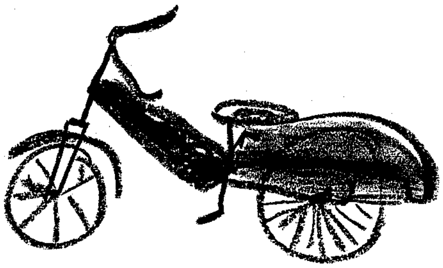
between European countries, the Euroskeptics (who had not then been so named) would have been delighted by the Gallic perfidy that ensued. The British Foreign Office's hope that the plane would facilitate entry into the Common Market was vetoed within three months of the development treaty's being signed. De Gaulle declared that, for various self-evident reasons of history and geography, Britain was unfit to be a member of the Common Market. Consolingly, he pointed out that of course it was perfectly feasible for ventures like the Concorde to continue and succeed without closer formal ties between the countries. Such typical loftiness dismayed and infuriated the British. But de Gaulle was right: when British engineers and navvies laid out the French railways, in the mid-nineteenth century, the French dealt directly with the British contractors; and a century later, when Richard Rogers co-designed the Centre Beaubourg, there was no need for British Euromembership. Perhaps, with the rise of nationalism, many of us have forgotten the earlier cross-European movements of cathedral builders, scholars, artists, composers. Europhiles could argue that complete freedom of movement within Europe would only be a return to pre-passport days, with political and monetary union paralleling the religious union of pre-Reformation Europe. For Rome, now read Brussels.

In early 1964, the British and French manufacturers had dreamed of a fleet of a thousand three hundred and seventy Concordes linking the world's great cities. In the end, a mere sixteen were built, and, after unsuccessful attempts to make routes to South America and the Far East, reality dwindled to a mere transatlantic service. In terms of that initial hope, the project was clearly a vast failure. Even so, it was less of a failure than the American SST project, which was called off in 1971, or the Russian Tu-144. The Konkordski, after a very public crash at the 1973 Paris Air Show, and the loss of another aircraft, in 1978, was soon mothballed, having logged only a hundred and two passenger-carrying journeys. If supersonic flight was a hundred-metre race, then the American champion declined to leave the blocks, the Russian pulled up after five metres with a hamstring injury, while the Anglo-Frenchman romped home only to find spectators jeering at his time, his style, and the cut of his shorts.

TODAY, we distinguish Concorde's failure as a project from its success as a plane: success not as a money-maker but as an innovation, a plane that has flown commercially for two decades without killing a single passenger, a beautiful object, a thing of veneration and mystique. Yes, it is "just" a small, very fast plane that is, in the lumpenspeak of the in-flight brochure, "the preeminent time management tool for the international traveller." Yes, it does cut "just" three or four hours off the transatlantic crossing. Yes, it probably was developed for the wrong reasons, and did cost a fortune—money that could have been spent on more worthwhile social causes (except that it probably wouldn't have been; Prime Minister Harold Wilson cancelled military aircraft to keep Concorde going and might have done the reverse if he'd been allowed to cancel Concorde). As against that, there is nothing like it in the skies, from its appearance—half stilted wader bird, half stealthy bomber—to the kick in your back on the runway, from the heart-stopping moment a minute after takeoff when the afterburners are cut, to the final airy floatingness at fifty-five thousand feet.

Yes, it is "just" an executive convenience, with its drear marketing moments, like the ritual distribution of product-endorsing gifts (leather CD carrier, silver-plated rocker-blotter, Filofaxy address-book item, and so on). At the same time, it has a transcendent quality. Thus it is the only commercial airliner that, flying east to west, can overtake time: if it weren't for the International Date Line, you feel, you could fly round and round the world getting younger all the while. Or take the ordinary, casual miracle I encountered earlier this year. I took an evening flight in February, leaving a darkened London at seven-fifteen and setting my watch to New York time, two-fifteen, as we were on the runway. After the climb and the caviar, the cabin readouts settled at Mach 2.00, fifty-six thousand feet, and -57° Celsius external temperature. Then, around four o'clock, we started catching up with the yellow bruise of the sunset I had already experienced back in London. Eastbound travellers on the red-eye are familiar with having a raucous sunup hurled at them prematurely, but that is merely something expected that occurs before the body is ready for it. Overtaking time in the opposite direction is much weirder: you are unpeeling the previous sunset into late evening—something impossible at a 747's airspeed. So, for an hour, the yellow-and-red edge of the world grew brighter, before yielding to an over-all late-evening blue. The Concorde, having shown us this outrage against nature, began to descend and slow, handing back to time its natural authority; as we came in to land, night already was falling again, slatily over Manhattan.



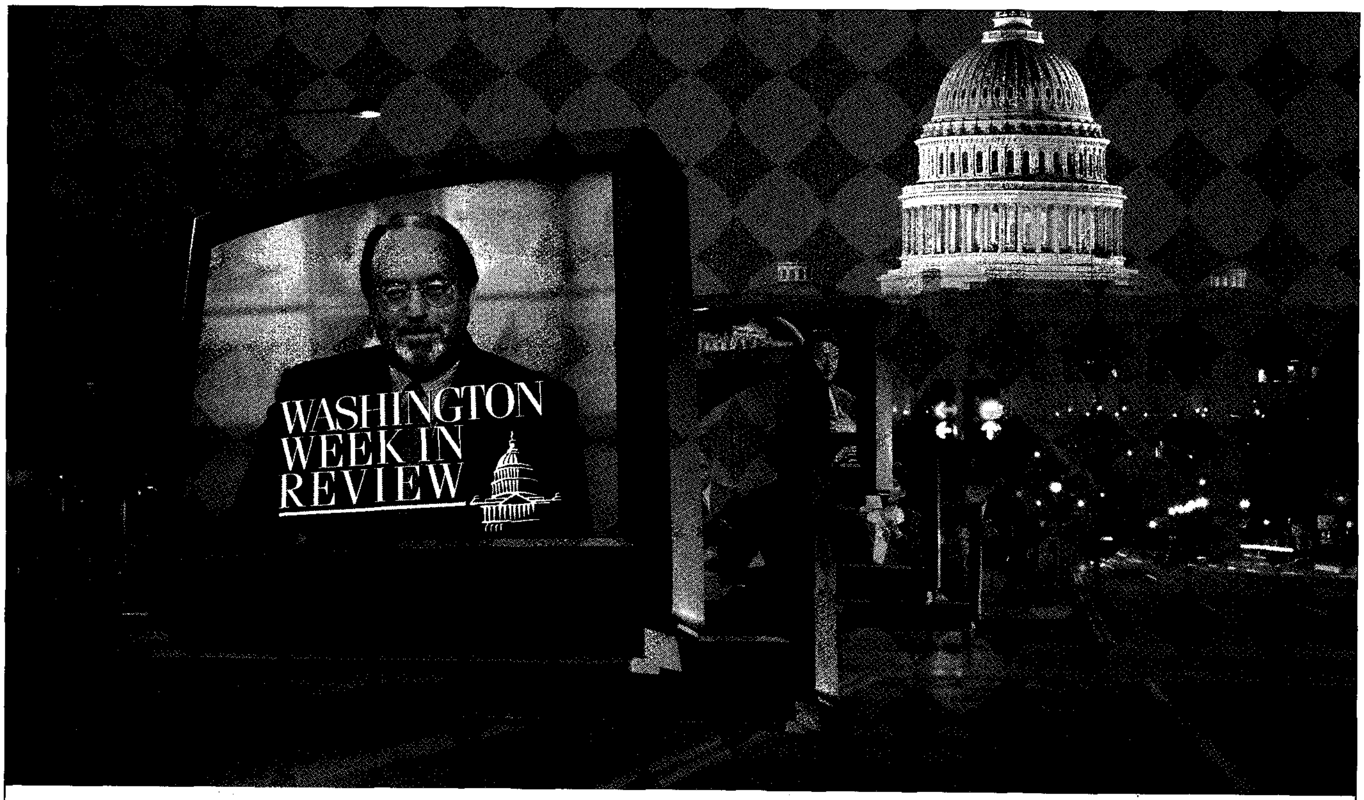
Concorde, having floated into stratospheric myth, could probably now retire with a good reputation, as a brave venture that just happened to suffer from an overstretched development period (what one Air France engineer delightfully called "industrial existentialism"), an oil-price hike, and a market change. British Airways, with a certain complacent cheek, even puts out regular stories about how the airplane is now a money-maker. Perhaps it is, in the magical world of bookkeeping, a world in which "Forrest Gump" never turned a profit (at least if you believe what the studio initially told the book's author, according to several news reports). But there is a lesson here for the Channel Tunnel's developers: if you have a high-tech product that commands public loyalty, then in the end, somehow or another, your massive debts will be locked in a box, swords will be shoved through it, a spangled woman will make a pass, and, when the box is opened—hey, presto!—where did those nasty debts go? They went *poof.*

THE Tunnel has different, more modern debts, resulting from a different kind of Anglo-French collaboration. The Concorde was an old-style state-funded *grand projet* of the sort the French tend to believe in more than the British do. When it ran into trouble, it was kept going with state money until the point at which it could be off-loaded onto the private sector: a shotgun wedding made comparatively painless by the size of the dowry. By the time the Channel Tunnel project was launched, in 1986, both politics and the market had changed. On the British side, the signatory was Mrs. Thatcher, who viewed state funding of public works as an altogether Stalinist notion. In addition, the lessons of open-ended money-drainers like the Concorde had clearly been absorbed by government. This time, the state's approach was wilier: grant the private sector a concession to develop the project, allow it to run the risks, watch it make its money back (or suffer catastrophic losses), decline to bail it out, and, finally, insist that, fifty-five years after the concession was granted, the whole thing be handed over to the state.

You could read what followed as a vindication of the government's canniness; or as an indication that the market couldn't accurately estimate the cost of making an ice cube at the North Pole; or as proof that this sort of complex, large-scale international project should never be expected to make a return on investment in the lifetime of the investor. The eight years from the signing of the concession to the official opening of the Tunnel, in 1994, were marked by the thrombotic normality of uncontrollable costs, unavoidable delays, emergency-rights issues, and public standoffs between constructor and concessionaire. In 1987, the project was expected to cost $7.9 billion; eight years later, its costs had risen to fourteen billion. At this point, Eurotunnel, the operating company, was paying out three million dollars a day, merely to service the interest on its spiralling debt. By September of 1995, things were so bad that Eurotunnel suspended most of its interest payments and, the following April, announced one of the biggest losses in British corporate history, $1.4 billion.

With everyone scurrying after refinancing packages, the Tunnel then suffered what the Concorde has always avoided: a major disaster. Bits of Concorde's rudder have occasionally fallen off, and now and then it might have had to put down in Nova Scotia with Elton John on board, but nothing to make much more than a down-page paragraph. On the evening of November 18th last year, smoke was spotted coming from a lorry before the freight train entered the Tunnel on the French side. Some thirteen kilometres later, the train stopped beneath the waves, a failure in the safety system prevented the driver from uncoupling the locomotive and the club car from the blazing wagons, temperatures may have reached a thousand degrees Celsius, the tracks buckled, the Tunnel's concrete lining was burned through, and thirty-one passengers plus three crew were very, very lucky. As they lay on the floor of the club car fearing death, with wet napkins clamped to their faces and black smoke festering around them, they did not, *pace* Eric Cantona, find that the train was a place "to *breathe*."

One of the strangest effects of the fire was mentioned in passing by the French chairman of the safety authority: "There had been enormous heat, but right at the centre of the blaze we were stepping over whole pineapples which had been scorched but not burnt." More predictable conse-



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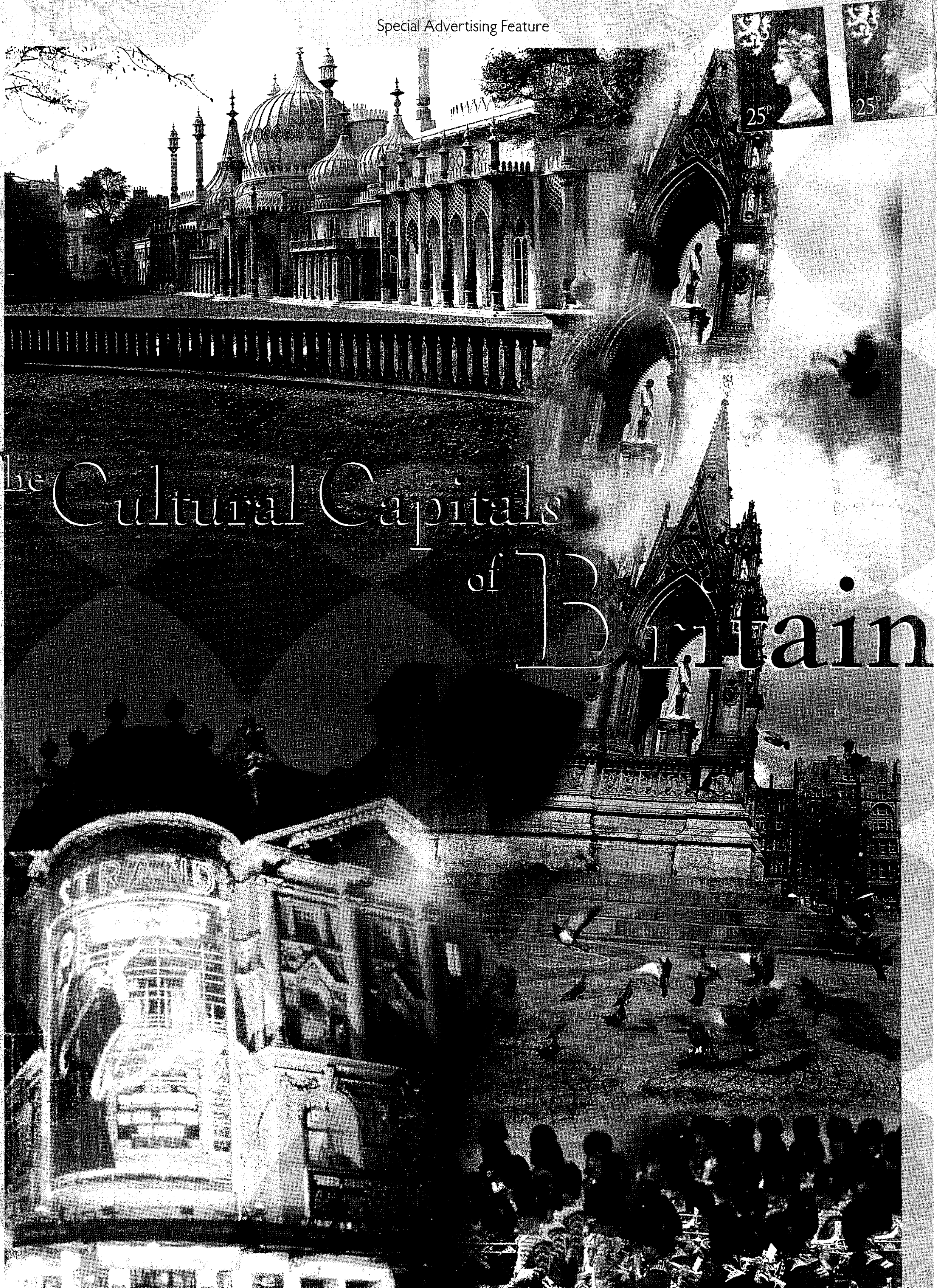
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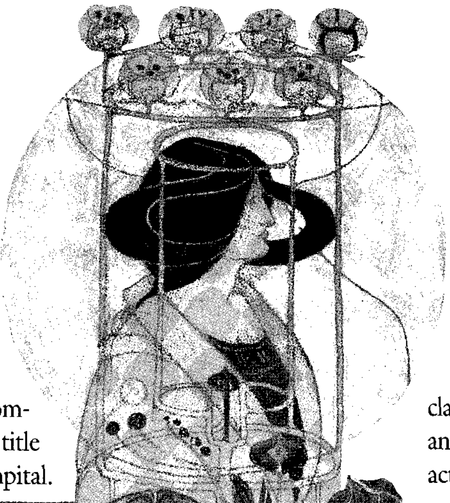

Detail of Watercolor, 1896

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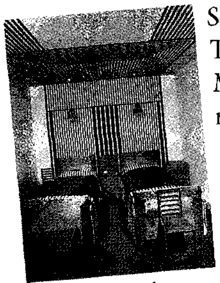

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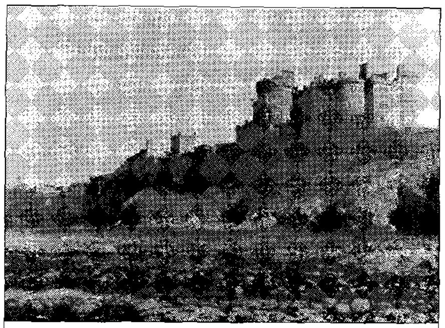

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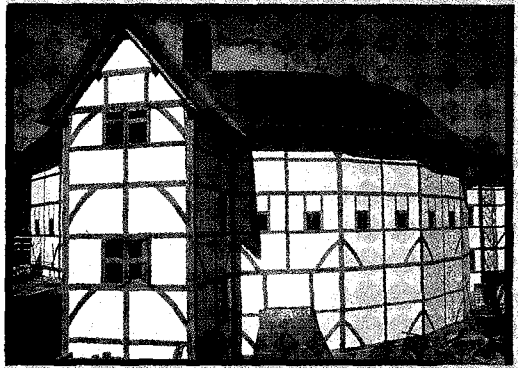
Few places on earth can boast the artistic and cultural riches of the art capitals of Great Britain. Classical painting, sculpture, music, and theatre have flourished in British cities from medieval times to the present. But Great Britain is also known as the cradle of the avant-garde—producing cutting-edge music sensations, hit plays, and musicals that sweep the world. A dazzling variety of homegrown festivals also bring international talent to the streets of British cities.

Europe's largest city, **London**, is one of the great cultural capitals of the world, with more museums, galleries, and opera houses than even the most ardent culture-seeker could wish for. It's also indisputably the vibrant epicenter of the newly thriving British film industry, and the site of one of the world's oldest, yet most innovative theatre districts.



Shakespeare's Globe faithfully reconstructed with authentic Elizabethan materials and techniques.

Begin blazing your trail through London with a visit to **The National Gallery**, which houses one of the world's greatest collections of paintings. Create a personalized tour of this vast museum by first visiting The Sainsbury Wing's micro-gallery, where touch-screen computer terminals let you to plan your ideal itinerary. From September through December 1997, **The Royal Academy of Arts** will mount an exhibition entitled "The 20th-Century Show: the Age of Modern Art." Beginning in October 1997, **The Tate Gallery**, home to the national collection of modern art, will feature the exhibition "Symbolism and British Art."

Fall is also the best time of year to take in London's famous **West End**, where nearly fifty theaters occupy a single square mile. But while every arts enthusiast has London on their cultural itinerary, not everyone realizes that, within an hour or two by road, rail, or air, there are other equally resplendent culture-rich cities in Britain to explore.

* * *

BIRMINGHAM
ENGLAND'S REGIONAL ART POWERHOUSE

With its impressive International Convention Centre, and its many museums and art institutions, Birmingham is the rising star of the British cultural scene.

Not to be missed on any itinerary is **Birmingham's City Museum and Art Gallery**, home to one of the world's most comprehensive collections of Pre-Raphaelite paintings. Also essential

On the cover/clockwise: Brighton's Royal Pavilion; Albert Square, Manchester; Guards' Parade, London; Strand Theater, Aldwych

All photos in this feature courtesy of the British Tourist Authority.

Acoustically "perfect" Symphony Hall is home to the world-class City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

is **The Barber Institute of Fine Arts**, whose outstanding galleries contain a venerable collection of European masters including Rembrandt, Rubens, and Degas.

The performing arts are well-represented in Birmingham, too. **The Birmingham Royal Ballet**, an innovative sister of the Royal Ballet, is under the artistic direction of David Bintley, and performs classical and contemporary works at the city's **Hippodrome**. The luxurious new **Symphony Hall**, is home to The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra which, under the direction of Sir Simon Rattle, became recognized as one of Britain's acclaimed orchestras.

Throughout 1997, the streets of Birmingham will come alive with its many arts festivals, including the **Readers and Writers Festival** in May, a jazz festival in July, and the **Birmingham International Film and Television Festival** in November.

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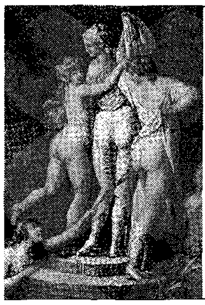

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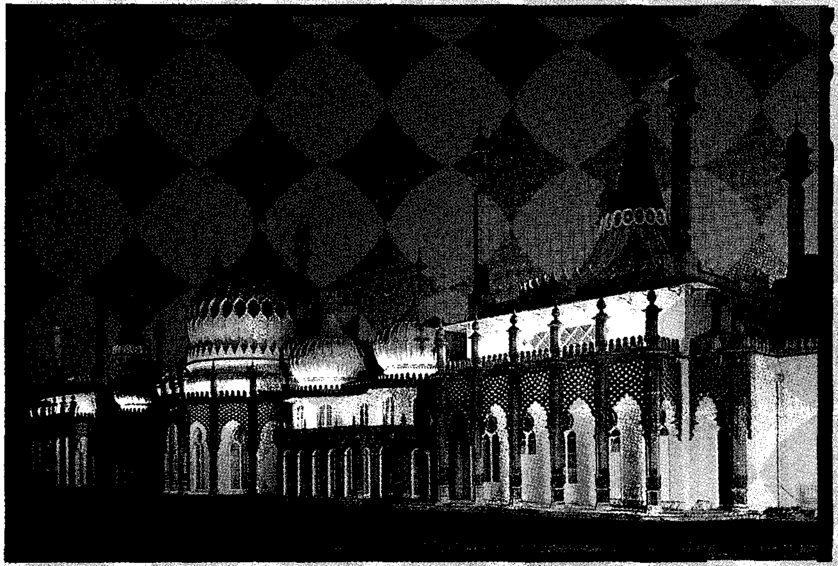
BRIGHTON
BRITAIN'S CHARMING CITY-BY-THE-SEA

Britain's favorite seaside resort, Brighton, also enjoys a reputation as a thriving arts center with a casual, bohemian air. The over-the-top atmosphere of this charming city is best experienced with a visit to the **Royal Pavilion**—once the pleasure palace of The Prince of Wales (later George IV) and his mistress, it has been faithfully restored in all its exuberant Regency splendor.

Adjacent to the pavilion you'll find the **Brighton Museum and Art Gallery**, which houses fabulous Art Nouveau and Art Deco collections (featuring the famous sofa Salvador Dali designed after Mae West's lips). A major exhibition opens April 26th entitled "Les Sixties: Britain and France 1960-1973," to run through June.

From May 3rd through 25th, the **Brighton Festival** bursts on the scene—jamming more than 450 events into three spectacular weeks. 1997 highlights include The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Gesher Theatre from Israel, and performances by violinist Pinchas Zukerman.



Queen Victoria so disapproved of the opulent Royal Pavilion that she once planned to have it razed.

MANCHESTER
THE SOUL OF BRITAIN

Manchester has long enjoyed a reputation as one of England's prime regional cities of art and culture, with a dazzling mix of some of the best theatre, classical concerts, festivals, and club life outside of London. Recently chosen as the venue for the Commonwealth Games of 2002, Manchester has invested heavily in a new transportation system, as well as a new concert hall and sporting complex.

The home of the finest in British regional theatre, this year Manchester will also host troupes from around the world during its **Vivacity! International Theatre Season** held from April 17th

Albert Square in Manchester.

through the end of June. The 1997 program includes leading international companies like La Cuadra de Sevilla from Spain, and Theater Titanick from Germany (which combines fire, water, sand, and music in two spectacular outdoor extravaganzas). Not to be missed!

The **Manchester Festival**, held this year from September 24th through October 5th, is the premier live arts and television event in Britain. It takes place in theatres, parks, city streets, and the city's many club venues. A word about Manchester's club culture—it's nonstop, all-night, and extremely fluid, which means that the hottest clubs frequently change names and locations on different nights. Check street posters for club ads, or Manchester's *City Life* magazine, for weekly happenings.

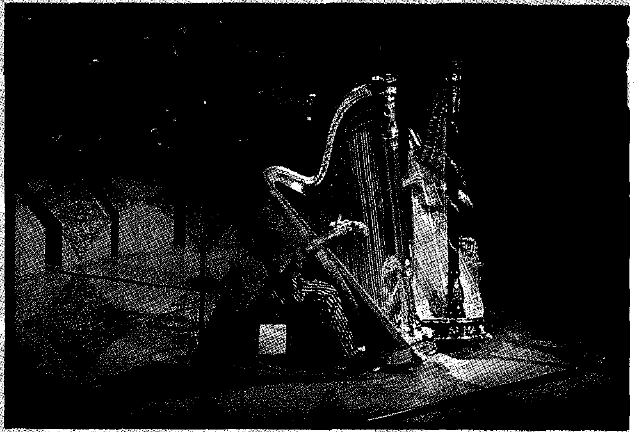
CARDIFF
CITY OF SURPRISES

Europe's youngest capital city, Cardiff is the political and cultural heart of Wales. Boasting a magnificent new Civic Centre, hundreds of acres of lush, green parklands crowned by an ancient castle, Cardiff is also one of the most beautiful cities in Great Britain.

The Welsh have a reputation for being excellent singers, so it's not surprising that the **Welsh National Opera** is one of Europe's most outstanding companies. While it regularly tours the world, the National Opera holds all of its premières in Cardiff, at the recently restored **New Theatre**. On May 19th, a new production of Verdi's "Simon Boccanegro" debuts, while June 6th sees a revival of Janáček's "From the House of the Dead."

St. David's Hall, one of Europe's best concert venues, will feature the Moscow State Symphony Orchestra in performance on May 9th, and hold the popular **Cardiff Singer of the World** competition throughout June.

The World Harps Festival at St. David's Hall in Cardiff.



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EDINBURGH
THE FESTIVAL CITY

Scotland's Edinburgh is one of Europe's stateliest capital cities. Like Rome it is built on seven hills, and it possesses a stunning skyline, magnificent architecture, and a cosmopolitan atmosphere.

As the festival city, Edinburgh's tour de force is the **Edinburgh International Festival**, to be held this summer from August 10th to the 30th. This year marks the festival's fiftieth anniversary; to celebrate, it will feature new productions of classical and jazz concerts, as well as experimental theatre and dance performances.

During the same three weeks in August, the **Edinburgh Festival Fringe** brings its irreverent brand of creative mayhem to the streets. An off-shoot to the official festival, the Fringe is now even larger than its mother celebration, and has developed a reputation as the place to see emerging talent first.

This is but a partial survey of the cultural capitals of Britain. A complete list of outstanding cities would have to include **Bristol**, with its world-famous **Old Vic** theatre; **Glasgow**, home of the **Scottish National Opera**, **Newcastle**, and **Liverpool**, which engendered the British music invasion.

THE WWW STANDS FOR WHO, WHAT, AND WHERE...

With all that Britain's cultural cities have to offer, it can be hard keeping track of the things you want to see and do. The newly launched British Tourist Authority website will provide comprehensive listings and ticket information for all the events covered here, as well as hundreds more. Visit it at **www.bta.org.uk**

For more information on festivals and events, you can also contact the **British Tourist Authority** at 212.986.2200 or 800-GO-2-BRITAIN. Tickets for many of the events listed here are available through the Edwards and Edwards booking agency by calling 800-223-6108.

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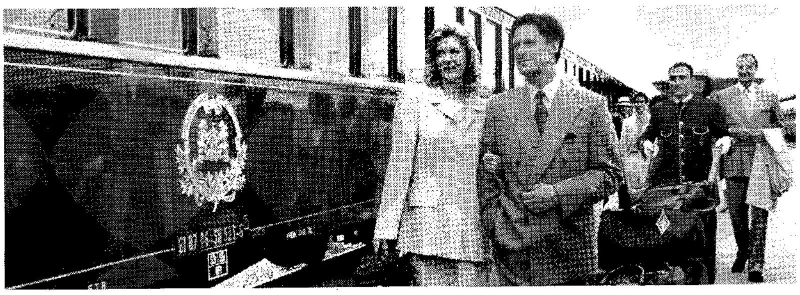

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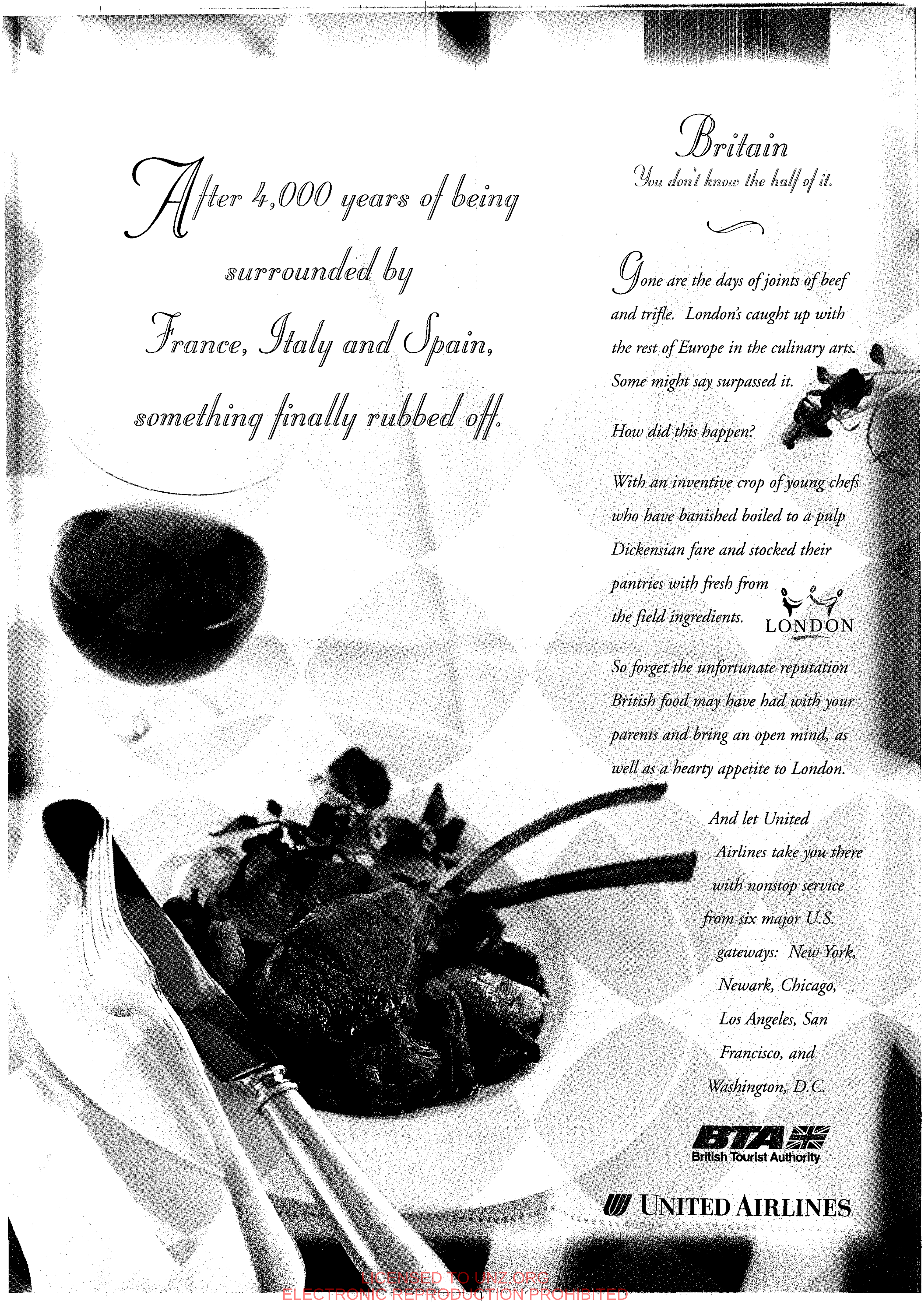

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LONDON

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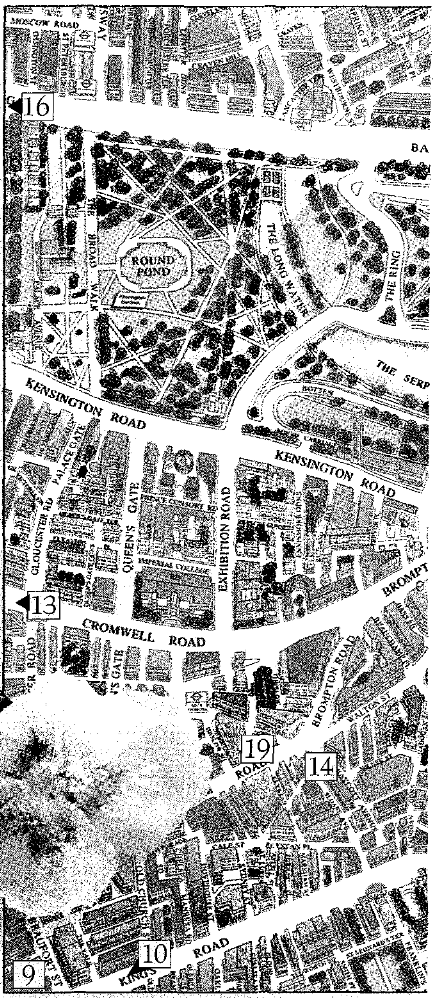

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All over town -from Soho to Knightsbridge to Primrose Hill, sleek new restaurants, with cuisines as sophisticated as their decor, are appearing on a weekly basis. Even fashionable department stores now feature restaurants as chic as the merchandise that surrounds them, with clientele to match. And wonders of wonders there are pubs people frequent for the food.

Yes, London has come out of the culinary dark ages. Today the cuisine is lighter and much more varied. Londoners are digging into the finest Indian, Provencal, Thai, and even Cajun fare. So, forget the myth that everything in London is either baked or boiled beyond recognition and remember the names of the restaurants listed on this page.

For even more information about London's finest restaurants and night life call the British Tourist Authority at 1-800-357-2748 for your free copy of "London Life." You'll not only find enough restaurants to see you through a memorable vacation, but more than enough to bring you back.

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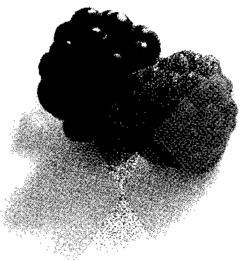

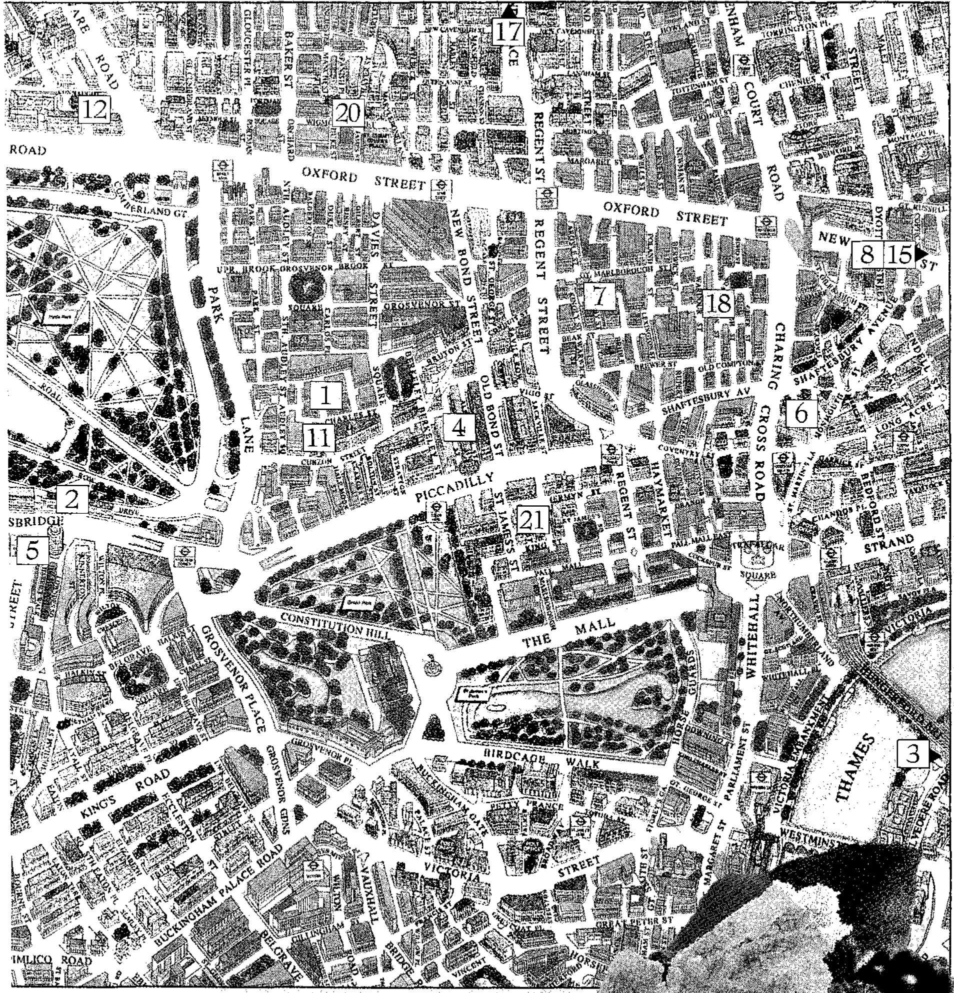
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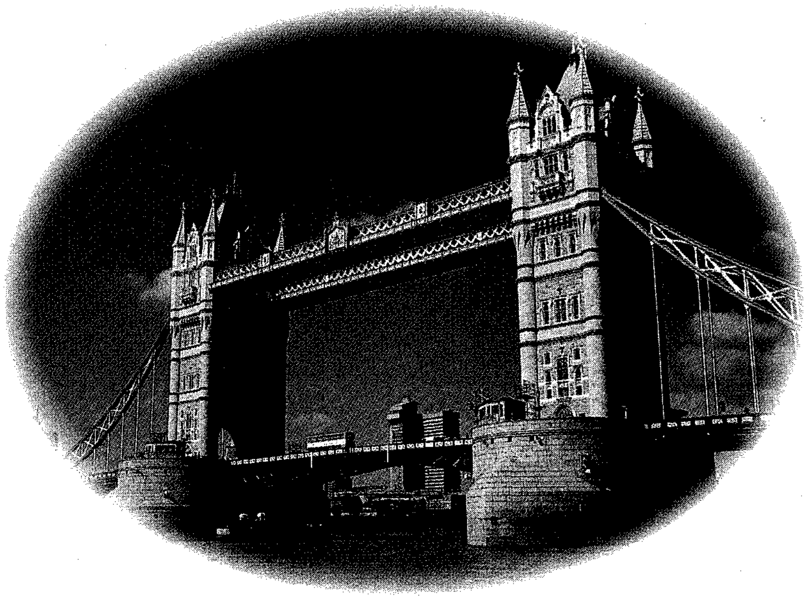

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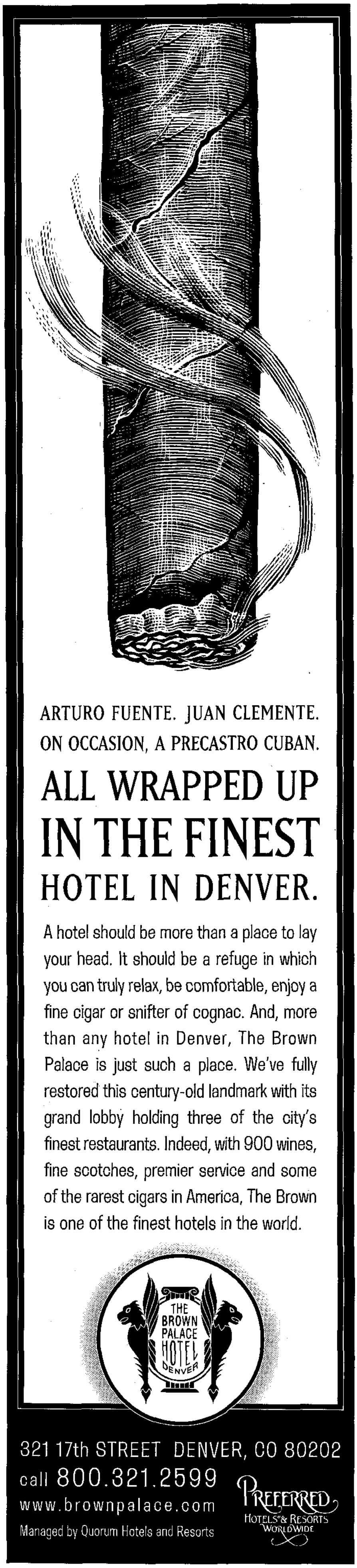
quences were: a fall in the share price, a closing of the Tunnel, a suspension of shuttle freight traffic (which holds), an extra quarter hour to half hour on the crossing time, loss of revenue, and loss of consumer confidence. A survey commissioned last winter by Eurotunnel itself indicated that thirty-two per cent of Britons thought the Tunnel unsafe (as against twenty per cent of the more sanguine and pro-project French). Reactions to disasters that you have avoided tend to be devoid of the strictest logic. I remember my own pointlessly jaunty response at the time (having been booked to travel on Eurostar two days after the fire). I thought, Well, the passenger train's still safe, the car shuttle's still safe, I just won't go to France in a pineapple truck.

I also thought, I'm glad I didn't buy a few Eurotunnel shares all those years ago. They peaked in 1989, at £11.72, and at the last report were staggering around at just over seventy pence. The standstill on interest repayments has been extended to December 14th of this year. The current alternative to bankruptcy is a package involving a debt-for-equity swap that would cede forty-nine per cent of Eurotunnel's ordinary shares to the banks. This will have to be voted on by the banks and the shareholders—shareholders who have already seen their equity diluted over the years. The damaged south tunnel is scheduled to reopen in May. Then the whole process of pretending, as with Concorde, that the Tunnel is "really" making a profit can begin. Perhaps it might even do so, by the time the Tunnel is handed back to the British and French governments. (The original date for this was 2042, but the concessionaires have been granted one ten-year extension in recognition of their difficulties.) It could well be that those pineapples were emblematic: financial temperatures in the Tunnel have been track-buckling, yet the valuable fruit, though scorched, has remained mysteriously unburnt.

THE final lesson of both the Tunnel and the Concorde is not so much about technology, finance, politics, and transnational collaboration as about perception. What is success and what is failure? At a certain level, it's a question of fact; beyond that, a matter of opinion and feeling. And opinions diverge at a very early stage. Even before the fire, Richard Hannah, a transport analyst for the Union Bank of Switzerland, judged it unlikely that the Tunnel would recoup more than fifty per cent of its cost in the remaining sixty-five years of its concession. He added menacingly, "On our calculations, in a reconstruction you have to destroy about £6 billion of capital. The question is, whose capital are you going to destroy?" This sounds pretty much like failure. On the other hand, listen to Lawrence Weiss, a bankruptcy expert at the INSEAD European Business School, near Paris. "With Eurotunnel, you have a firm that would almost be making money if you took away the financial charges," he noted. "Change the debt-equity structure and you have a terrifically viable company." If only bank managers thought so positively about our overdrafts.

And beyond this—beyond the experts, and the investors whose capital is going to be destroyed—lies the judgment of the members of the future public. It is they who pick up the bill—very directly in the case of Concorde, indirectly in the case of the Tunnel—and their payoff is the right to decide success and failure. Theirs is the perception that matters, that says whether something is a burnt fruit or a delicious pudding.

Early last month, I drove onto the car shuttle at Folkestone and unfolded my copy of the *Independent*. Franco-British technological collaboration, I there discovered, turns out to be much older than we thought. According to the prehistorian Dr. Aubrey Burl, Stonehenge, that totemically British monument, was in fact built by the French. Burl identified an array of features—horseshoe layout, astronomical alignment, geometry, figurative art—that have few parallels within our island but many in Brittany. He concluded that the structure "was probably the handiwork of a powerful and intrusive aristocracy from somewhere in western France." Burl doesn't tell us the rest of the story, but we can well imagine it: the cutting edge of Neolithic technology, environmental protests, a race to get the henge up and running before Avebury, a huge overspend, a royal bailout, serious doubts as to whether society had ever needed the project, grudging popular acceptance deepening into true affection, and eventually a nice little artificial profit from entrance fees long after the massive construction costs have been written off and forgotten. *Plus ça change.* ♦



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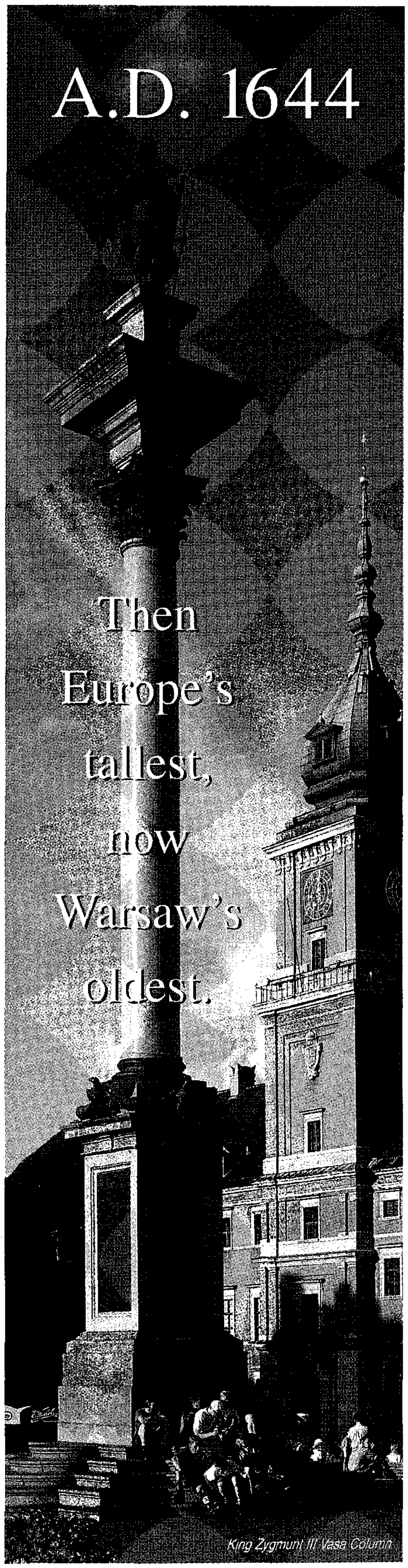
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PROFILE

THE UNTHINKABLE

How dangerous is Le Pen's National Front?

BY PHILIP GOUREVITCH

JEAN-MARIE LE PEN is a fisherman's son from Brittany. He was born in 1928 into a home without plumbing or electricity, and although he now lives in a mansion overlooking Paris, he likes to salt his speech with nautical wisdom. Last month, for instance, he told me, "When you have a boat full of water, the first thing consists of stopping up the hole where the water is coming in." We were talking about immigration. Le Pen, who is the founder and president of the National Front, thinks that France is being submerged by foreigners. Once the hole is plugged, he said, "You try to empty the boat so that it comes back into shape."

France has, in fact, served for centuries as a kind of lifeboat for Europe, welcoming the political, intellectual, and artistic castaways of nations with less tolerant regimes, and enjoying, in return, the reward of seeing Paris as the home address for an enormous amount of the Continent's proudest cultural and intellectual inheritance. But that's not the France the National Front hopes to bung and bail back into shape under its banner slogan, "France and the French First." In the words of Le Pen's son-in-law, Samuel Marechal, who is the leader of National Front Youth, "France no longer has the means to feed all the weirdos of the world."

One of the Front's most famous posters says, "Three million unemployed, that's three million immigrants too many!" Another depicts a jet airplane silhouetted against a setting sun, and promises, "When we come in . . . They go out!" For its mascot, the Front has claimed Joan of Arc, the illiterate fifteenth-century farm girl who heard voices telling her, in the name of God, to muster an army and rid France of its English occupiers. Joan did as God told her, and by the time she was burned as a heretic, shortly before her twentieth birthday, she had pretty well shown the foreigners the door.

A gilded sculpture of the uncanny Maid, riding her charger into battle, with her hair blown back, one hand on her sword and the other toting the flag, stands beside the fireplace in Le Pen's private study, and further renderings of modernity's first ultranationalist martyr proliferate in Front offices, in Front publications, and at Front gatherings. The French often describe Le Pen's nativist crusade with the peculiarly Anglo-Saxon word *folklorique*, and pure, defiant, uncorruptible, demonized, God-and-country Joan is the supreme totem of indigenous folk heroism—much older and more sacred than the tricolor. The only glitch in the legend as it relates to Le Pen's purposes is that Joan went to the stake a virgin, and the Front wants Frenchwomen to breed.

The French birth rate slowed down long before that of other European countries, and were it not for immigration France's population would have shrunk dramatically over the past century. Last Mother's Day, Le Pen called upon Frenchwomen to perform their patriotic duty through pregnancy. In the meantime, France has fifty-eight million citizens, and one of every four is a legal immigrant or the child or grandchild of an immigrant. Polls indicate that most French people regard the National Front as racist, or a threat to the Republic, but a majority (albeit a slim one) also sympathize with at least some of Le Pen's views. What's more, thirty per cent of French voters have, at one time, voted for the National Front.

The Front now controls the city halls of four major towns in the south, including Orange and Toulon; it has eleven delegates in the European Parliament, in Strasbourg; it has thousands of representatives on regional and municipal councils; its trade-union movement has the fourth-largest membership of France's eighteen police unions, and has also been especially successful at organizing prison workers; its activists recruit in high schools, in the military, and among pensioners; it runs its own security service, as well as soup kitchens, summer camps, a cadet-training program, a publishing house, and several national newspapers. It has never been stronger, or more firmly planted at the center of French political debate.

Some planks in the Front's platform—protectionist trade policies, school choice, cuts in taxes and welfare state services—might find support in the traditional right-wing parties that form the majority in President Jacques Chirac's somewhat wobbly coalition government. Other Front positions, like its hostility to the Maastricht treaty for European union, may be found across the French political spectrum. But subtract these points of overlap with the mainstream from the Front's agenda and all that remains to give the Party character is its extremism. Without its radical identity politics, the National Front would itself have no distinct identity, and no reason to exist.

At the inquisition that preceded her immolation, Joan of Arc was asked what satanic hex she had invoked to move the reluctant French into battle. She is supposed to have replied, simply, "What I said was '*Ride these English down*'—and I did it myself!" Le Pen, as a twentieth-century man, spins his war whoops with a little more irony. "We like foreigners," he told a rally of his supporters a few years ago. Then, after a pause, he added, "In their countries."

The traditional parties of both the left and the right spend a great deal of their energy these days simultaneously denouncing Le Pen as an antidemocratic philistine and pandering to his voters by seeking to coöpt his issues. The Front's rightward tug is spoken of as *lepenization*, but the Party is not content to serve as a pressure group; it wants to take power. Le Pen has issued warnings that current political practices are "establishing the premises for a civil war." He speaks ominously of "a significant event"—set off, perhaps, by an Islamic takeover in Algeria, or "a serious mishap" in France's working-class suburbs—that would serve the Front nicely at the polls.

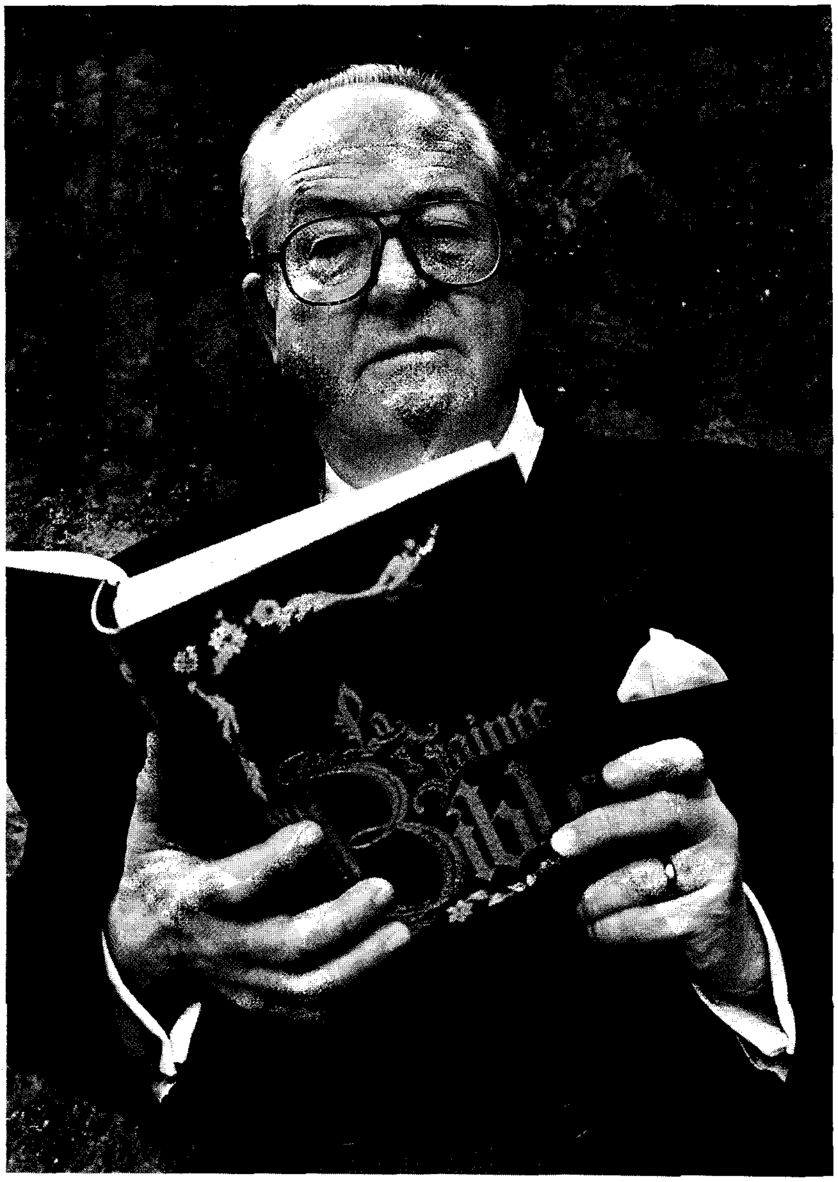
"It could be the trigger of a political wave," Le Pen told me.

"A wave for you?" I asked.

"Oh, surely it would be a wave for us," Le Pen said. "Without a doubt."

A CURIOUS thing about ultranationalist movements is that their strength is directly proportional to the host nation's weakness. Bad news for France is good news for the National Front. As the unemployment rate has worsened over the past fifteen years, hitting a post-Second World War high of 12.8 per cent in February, the Front's fortunes in national and local elections have steadily improved. Much of this support comes from former Communist voters. In 1995, Le Pen won fifteen per cent of the Presidential ballot, and the list of places where the Front regularly scores at least thirty per cent of the vote grows steadily. In a country with a plurality of parties, these are impressive numbers.

That France is in crisis is not in dispute. When the French speak of "*la crise*," which they do a great deal, they speak not only of their sense of material insecurity but also of a deeper psychic uncertainty about the future—of fears that the new liberal world order, heralded by economic globalization and European union, somehow saps the national essence. *La crise* is discussed in daily headlines and conversations as the name for a purely objective condition, the way one might speak of rain as it falls, but it is a portmanteau word that also encompasses a pervasive feeling of abandonment by the traditional parties of both the left and the right: they are seen to have grown sclerotic and remote, bogged down in corruption scandals and infighting. *La crise* has hit the young especially hard; at least one of every four people under the age of twenty-five cannot find a job. But the sense that France is rudderless and foundering afflicts even the comfortably off, and with it there comes a craving for leadership with spine and a mobilizing vision of a vigorous national destiny.



France is in crisis, and Le Pen has been preparing for such a moment ever since the defeat of the Vichy government. Photograph by Helmut Newton.

Le Pen has been preparing for such a moment with a tireless sense of purpose since the Allied liberation brought France's last "national revolution"—the Nazi-collaborationist Vichy government of Maréchal Philippe Pétain—to a halt. Le Pen founded the National Front in 1972, as a big-tent movement, uniting the long-divided factions of the extreme right—Pétain-

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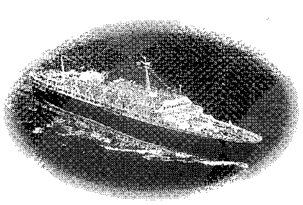

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ists and monarchists, Catholics and anti-Catholics, anti-abortionists and skinheads, malingering anti-Dreyfusards, and the embittered foes of decolonization like the former French-Algerian "*pieds noirs.*" At first the Front appeared as little more than a vehicle for Le Pen's charismatic leadership. Today, when local Front leaders regularly outperform Le Pen himself at the polls, nobody doubts that the Party's massive and finely tuned apparatus is primed to remain a fixture of the political landscape well after Le Pen exits. But the Party's ideas are still known simply as *lepenisme*, and the robust, sixty-eight-year-old Breton shows no signs of letting go.

Le Pen is the only major politician on the French scene who was not groomed at such élite schools as the École Nationale d'Administration. This is a plus. *Les Énarques* are unloved. They are viewed as an inbred and aloof political caste, blinded by privilege. During the immensely popular strikes that paralyzed much of France near the end of 1995, the refrain of a song from the Revolution—"Cut the aristocrats' throats"—was revived as "Cut the technocrats' throats." Le Pen, who denounced the strikes when they started but has since ridden the discontent of the populist wave, likes to call the ruling political order decadent. The more common complaint is that *les Énarques* are wonks, and it is said that they speak their own language—a blithe technocratic dialect of the mother tongue which leaves the French feeling patronized, hoodwinked, or at least miserably bored. Le Pen, on the other hand, speaks what even people who loathe him take pains to describe as "a very good French." He is unquestionably France's most rousing orator, and his roaring flights of populist speech, rich in metaphor, sarcasm, bathos, and a sort of intimacy-building vulgarity, are accompanied by a repertoire of dramatic facial expressions, hand flailings, and full-body thrusts. As the Parisian intellectual Alain Finkielkraut observed to me, "It's strange—a demagogue who wants to speak well, while the others want to speak poorly to be understood."

Le Pen comes on as the rebel voice of the voiceless, fearlessly speaking truth to power. Still, it's hard to imagine that he wins votes when he repeatedly asserts his belief in racial inequality ("It appears evident to me," he says, "as it appears evident to the vast majority of French people"), or when he dismisses the gas chambers of the Holocaust as "a point of detail in the history of the Second World War." Anybody who goes for that sort of thing must already be in his corner, and such true believers are understood to make up only a small core of the Front's supporters. But apparently there are many more French people who just aren't much bothered by Le Pen's pronouncements on race and genocide. By repeatedly exposing and exploiting this broad popular indifference, Le Pen not only tests the legal limits of public expression (the French government has enacted speech laws outlawing Holocaust negation and incitements to racism); he also undermines the binding values and taboos of postwar French life. He gives voice to the previously unthinkable until it becomes unremarkable, and opens a space of tolerance for his program of intolerance, in which his calls for scrapping the Fifth Republic, established by Charles de Gaulle in 1959, sound almost sober.

A utopian Sixth Republic, as it is envisaged by National Front doctrine, would enjoy a constitution founded on the principle of "national preference." That means priority for the French in all things: schools, workplaces, culture, housing, and so on. The right of the soil, by which France traditionally granted citizenship to nearly everyone born within its borders—a right that was severely eroded by recent legislation—would be replaced by a German-style blood right. Laws would be rewritten to accelerate the expiration of immigrants' residency permits, thereby rendering the country's three or four million legal immigrants illegal, and illegal immigrants would be deported.

"There is a slogan that we have right now in our party," Le Pen told me when I visited him last month at his home in the Parisian suburb of Saint-Cloud. He sounded as if he had just decided to let me in on a secret. He presented himself as being at ease, as a man of frank spontaneity, and I had the impression that he found himself charming. He often rewarded his own soliloquies with a smile. He was, of course, on the job. I was being allowed to watch him work: the public man in his den, playing the private man, musing at day's end, with Paris spread out behind giant windows like a map on a war-room wall. He couldn't sit still as he spoke; his large body worked its way around each phrase in a constant, agile pantomime. For minutes at a time, he would shift into profile and not look at me, as if lost in the discovery of his

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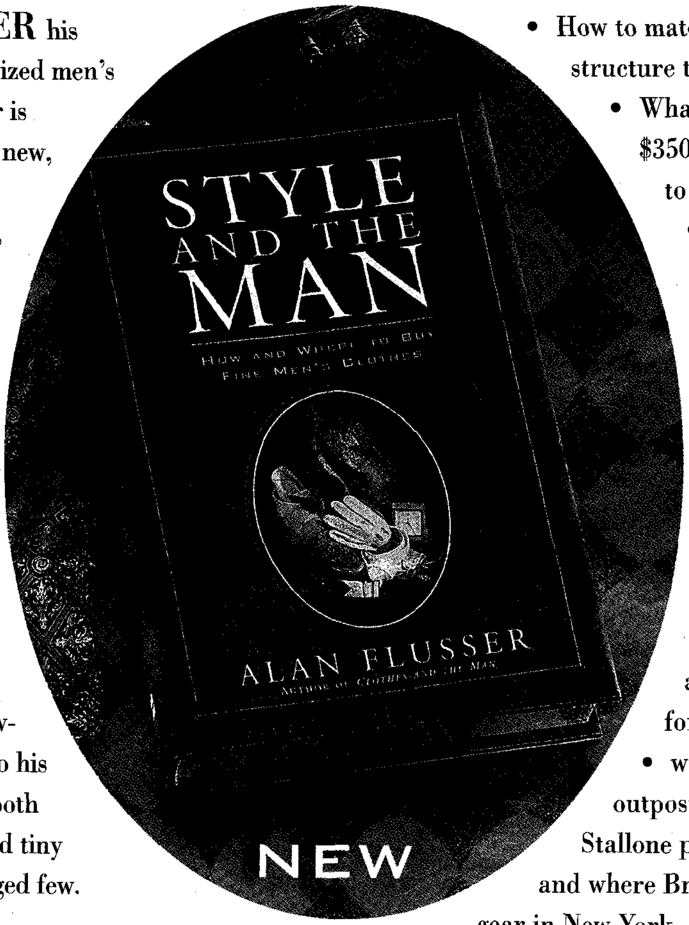
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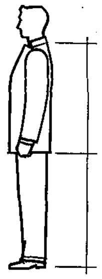

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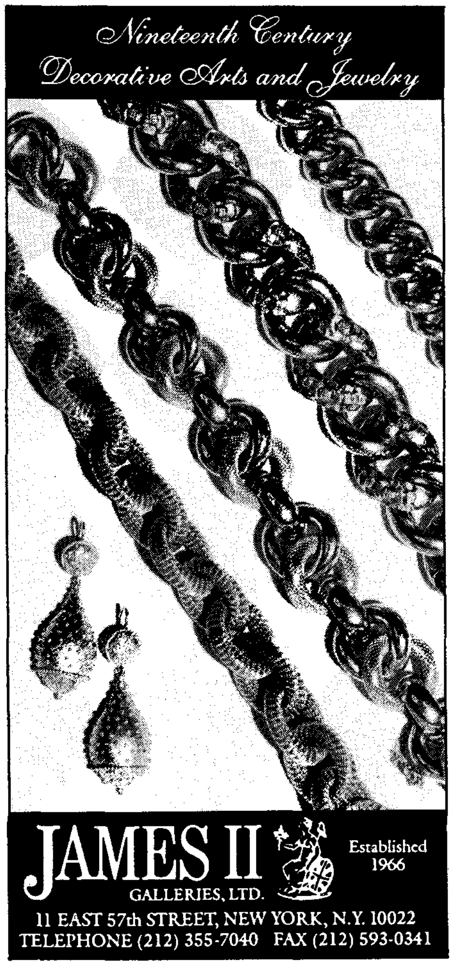
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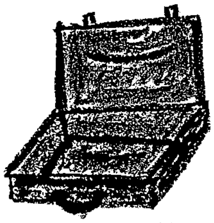
thoughts. Then he'd be back, eye to eye, seeking complicity; his voice lifted, his words got richer, and he smiled. The slogan he wanted to share with me was "I love my daughters more than my nieces, my nieces more than my cousins, my cousins more than my neighbors."

He went on to say, "But that doesn't mean that we detest our neighbors. The fact of being Francophile doesn't require being xenophobic. The fact that I prefer the French does not mean that I detest the English. I like them less than the French—*over all.* Because it could happen that I like an Englishman better than a Frenchman, individually, or a Senegalese more than an inhabitant of Saint-Cloud. It depends on his quality, on his affinities with me, on his opinions, and all that. But I think that it's very difficult to make people understand."



It's true that such subtlety can be lost on Le Pen's supporters. On May Day two years ago, some skinheads at a National Front rally in honor of Joan of Arc got hold of a bystander named Brahim Bouarram, a Frenchman of Moroccan origin, and pushed him into the Seine, where he drowned. Still, I was surprised that Le Pen felt misunderstood. He makes himself so clear. At one point, he asked me, "What do I have to do to not be racist? Marry a black woman?" Then he smiled, and added, "With AIDS, if possible?"

FORTY years ago, the town of Vitrolles, which lies halfway between Marseilles and Aix-en-Provence, was Cézanne country, just as he painted it: red rocks, olive groves, Mediterranean sun. Then, in the sixties and seventies, France experienced an economic boom, and the government constructed "new towns" around new industrial zones. The olive groves were paved over and replaced by a sort of giant housing project, set like a service area against a web of highway interchanges, with vast American-style shopping malls and vaster parking lots. Vitrolles is a freak on the Provençal landscape: the labyrinth of dreary concrete-slab architecture seems like a mirage from Slovakia or Ukraine.

In 1983, two years after François Mitterrand was elected France's first Socialist President, the people of Vitrolles elected a Socialist mayor. About twenty thousand people were living there at the time; very few were immigrants, and unemployment was almost unknown. Today, Vitrolles is a town of forty thousand, many of whom are immigrants or descendants of immigrants from Arab North Africa. About forty per cent of the population is under the age of twenty-five, and the rate of joblessness is one and a half times the national average. In early February, Vitrolles held a special mid-term municipal election, and the National Front won fifty-two and a half per cent of the vote—its first absolute electoral majority ever.

Shortly after the election, Vitrolles's new mayor, Catherine Mégret, gave an interview to a reporter for a German newspaper, in which she was quoted as saying, "These immigrants, it's totally nuts. . . . They produce I don't know how many urchins that they put on the street. They produce these urchins to get hold of benefits. They don't even raise them. At the same time, the French, who are responsible people, can no longer have children because they don't have the means." City Hall, she said, would cut support for immigrants, "so that they'll go elsewhere." That was the plan. Catherine Mégret's maiden name was Raskovscki; she is the granddaughter of Russian Jewish immigrants to France, but, she said, "the situation then was completely different. Today we're living in a difficult phase and have to take care of ourselves first." She also endorsed Le Pen's statements about racial inequality, explaining, "There are differences in the genes. That's what M. Le Pen says—blacks are better endowed for sports and dance than whites."

The Mayor's outburst was of more than ordinary interest, because Catherine Mégret is the wife of Bruno Mégret, who is Le Pen's heir apparent, and his chief rival within the Party's political structure. He is spoken of as the National Front's shrewdest ideologue and strategist, and the chief premise of Catherine Mégret's campaign had been, basically, that she would serve her term of office as her husband's mouthpiece and puppet. Campaign-finance irregularities in the past had barred Bruno Mégret from running for office in Vitrolles, but the victory was understood to be his.

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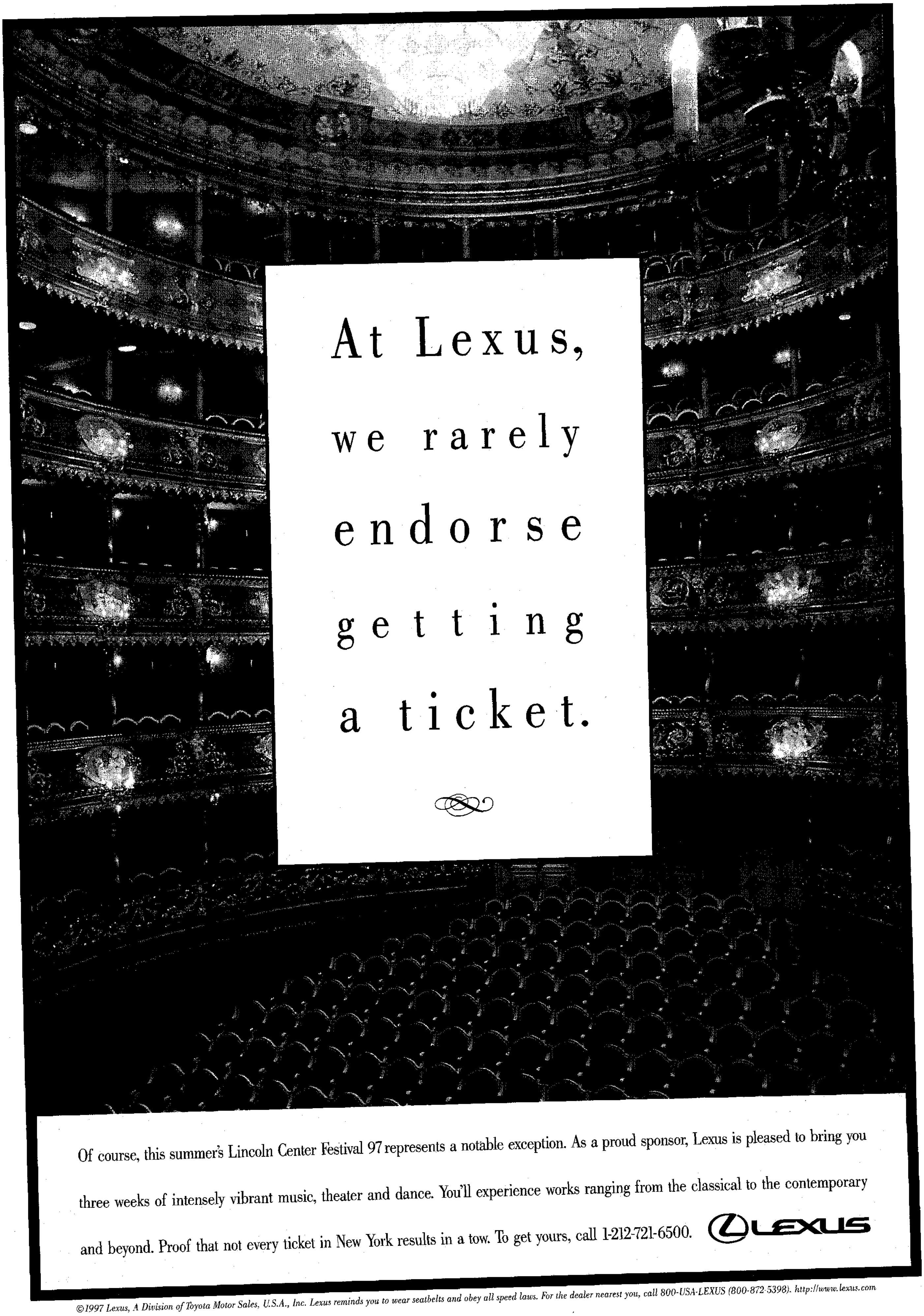

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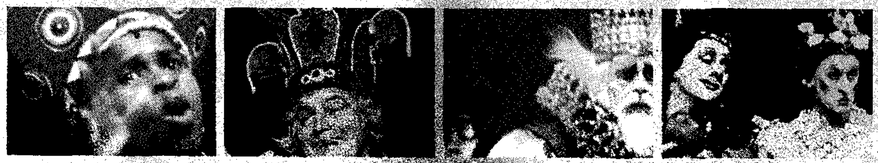

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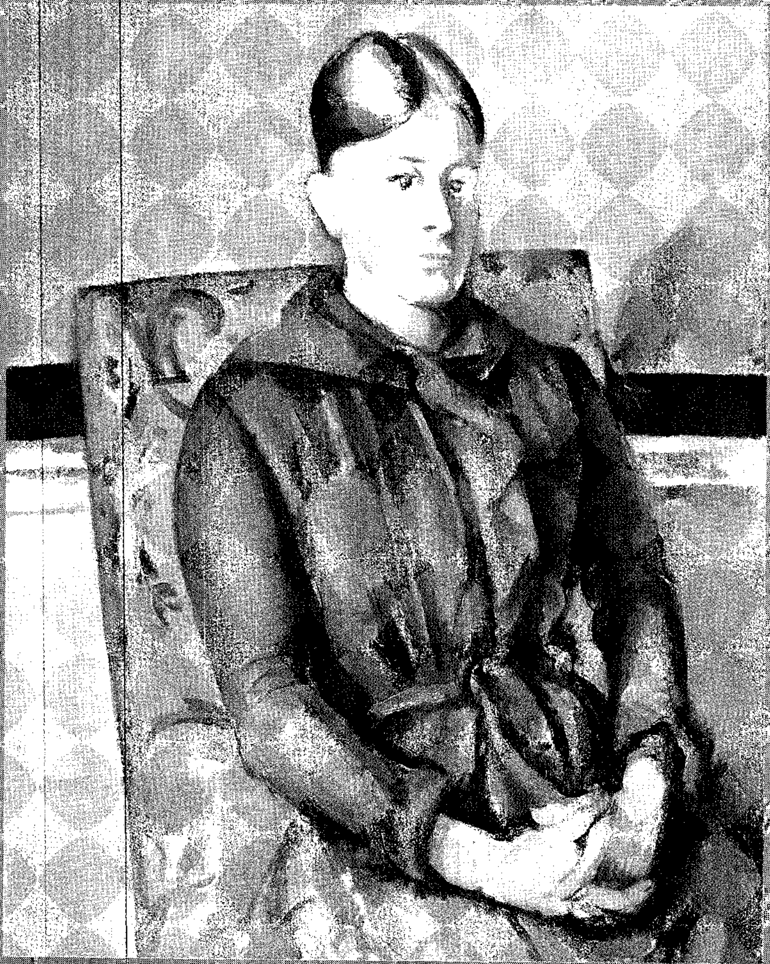

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HENZE: *Tristan*, Homero Francesch, piano
WAGNER: *Wesendonk Lieder*, Deborah Voigt, soprano
WAGNER: *Prelude* and *Liebestod* from "Tristan und Isolde," Deborah Voigt, soprano
July 12 and 14 at 8 P.M. Avery Fisher Hall

Program B

Happy Birthday Maestro
A program of popular favorites including Bizet/Sarasate's *Carmen Fantasy* with violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter; Pfitzner's Overture, *Das Käthchen von Heilbronn*; and choral selections with The Royal Opera Chorus and guest performers to be announced.
July 18 at 8 P.M. Avery Fisher Hall

Program C

BRAHMS: Violin Concerto, Anne-Sophie Mutter, violin
MENDELSSOHN: *Die erste Walpurgisnacht*, soloists and The Royal Opera Chorus
July 19 and 20 at 8 P.M. Avery Fisher Hall

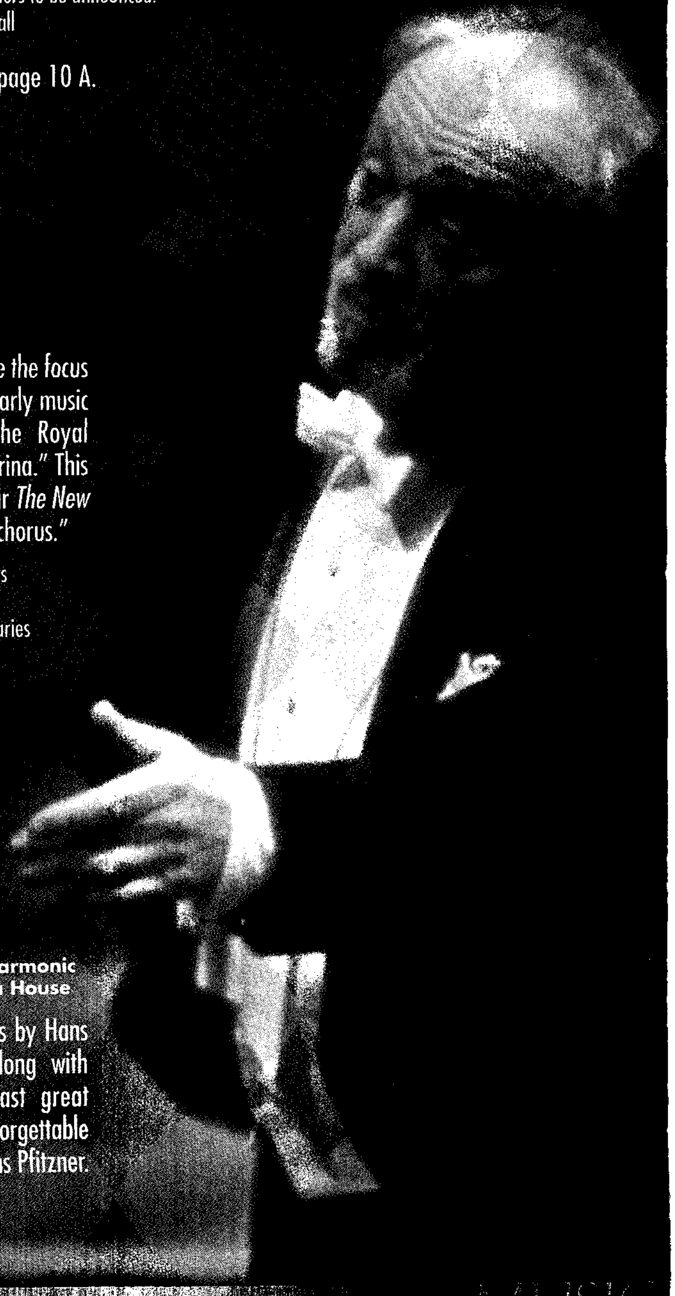
For additional New York Philharmonic performances, see Ornette Coleman on page 10 A.

THE WORLD OF PALESTRINA

POMERIUM
Alexander Blachly, Director

The ethereal polyphony of Palestrina will be the focus of two programs by the noted a cappella early music ensemble Pomerium, complementing the Royal Opera's performances of Pfitzner's "Palestrina." This is truly sublime music, interpreted by a choir *The New York Times* called "a beautifully groomed chorus."

Program A: Music of Palestrina and his Predecessors
July 20 at 8 P.M. Alice Tully Hall
Program B: Music of Palestrina and his Contemporaries
July 27 at 8 P.M. Alice Tully Hall

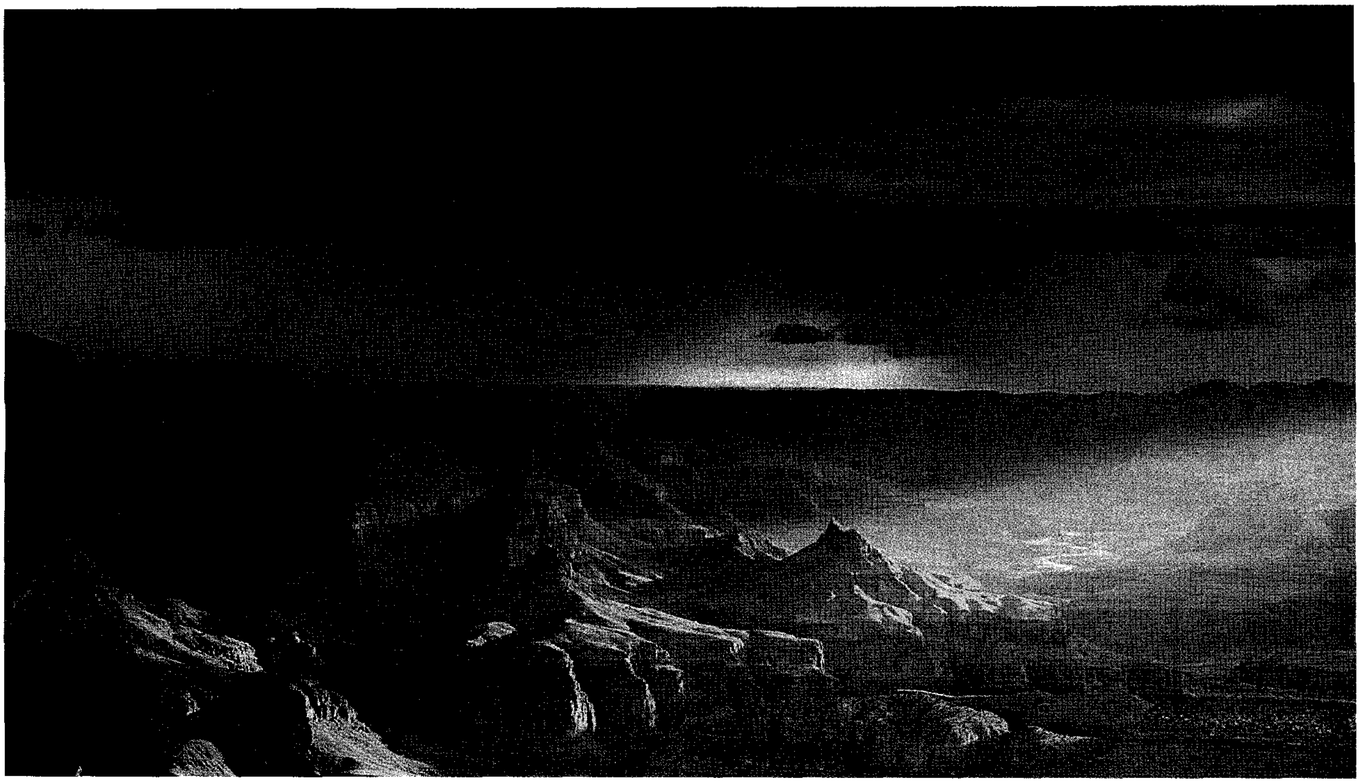


THE INTIMATE PFITZNER

THE CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
David Shifrin, Artistic Director
with musicians of the New York Philharmonic and the Orchestra of The Royal Opera House

This evening of chamber music and songs by Hans Pfitzner demonstrates that he was, along with Richard Strauss, one of Germany's last great Romantic composers. Don't miss this unforgettable performance of the intimate works of Hans Pfitzner.

July 23 at 7 P.M. Alice Tully Hall



I wasn't prepared for the wonder of it.

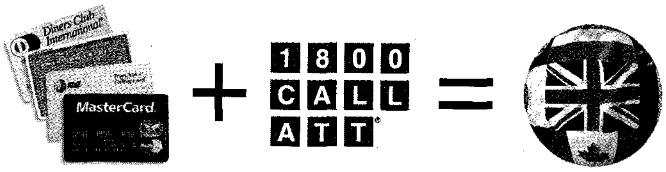
Wesley could spend hours at this very spot.

My best friend since grammar school.

I phoned him straight away in London.

Sure beats a bent postcard.

Two weeks late.



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WOZA AFRIKA: AFTER APARTHEID

A decade after the triumphant Woza Afrika! series of township protest plays presented by the Lincoln Center Theater, Lincoln Center Festival 97 offers a fresh look at South Africa's vibrant, diverse cultural life—this time in a political and social climate far different from a decade ago. All four of these presentations are U.S. premières, and star some of the most powerful actors in South Africa.

Presented in association with Lincoln Center Theater.

Support provided in part by The Skirball Foundation and Solomon & Blanche De Jonge Foundation

The Suit

Program A: The Suit

Written by Mothobi Mutloatse after a story by Cam Thembe/A Market Theatre production directed by Barney Simon and re-created by John Matshikiza

An eerie, compelling tale of weakness, lust, betrayal, punishment and its unexpected consequences.

July 8 at 8:30 P.M.; July 9, 10, 11, and 12 at 8 P.M.; July 12 at 2 P.M.; July 13 at 3 P.M.
John Jay College Theater

On My Birthday

Program B: Bergville Stories

Conceived, written, and directed by Duma Ndlovu/A work commissioned by the Playhouse Company, Durban

A township-style play by the director of the Woza Afrika series, *Bergville Stories* takes place in a hostel threatened by a surrounding township. The hostel workers recall the heroic resistance of blacks against white oppression in a bloody 1956 protest, and plea for harmony among clashing township factions.

July 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19 at 8 P.M.; July 19 at 2 P.M.; July 20 at 3 P.M.
John Jay College Theater

Program C: On My Birthday

Written and directed by Aubrey Sekhabi/Originally presented by the Market Theatre and The North-West Province Arts Council

A harrowing, almost crazily intense domestic drama set in a township household today.

July 22, 23, 24, 25, and 26 at 7 P.M.; July 26 at 2 P.M.; July 27 at 3 P.M.
LaGuardia Theater

White Men With Weapons

Program D: White Men With Weapons

Written and performed by Greig Coetzee/Directed by Garth Anderson

A collage of monologues recalling the stunned reactions of members of the Republic of South Africa's Defence Force on hearing the news that Nelson Mandela had been freed.

July 22, 23, 24, 25, and 26 at 9:30 P.M.; July 27 at 7 P.M.
LaGuardia Theater

Programs C and D presented in association with Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School for Music & Art and the Performing Arts

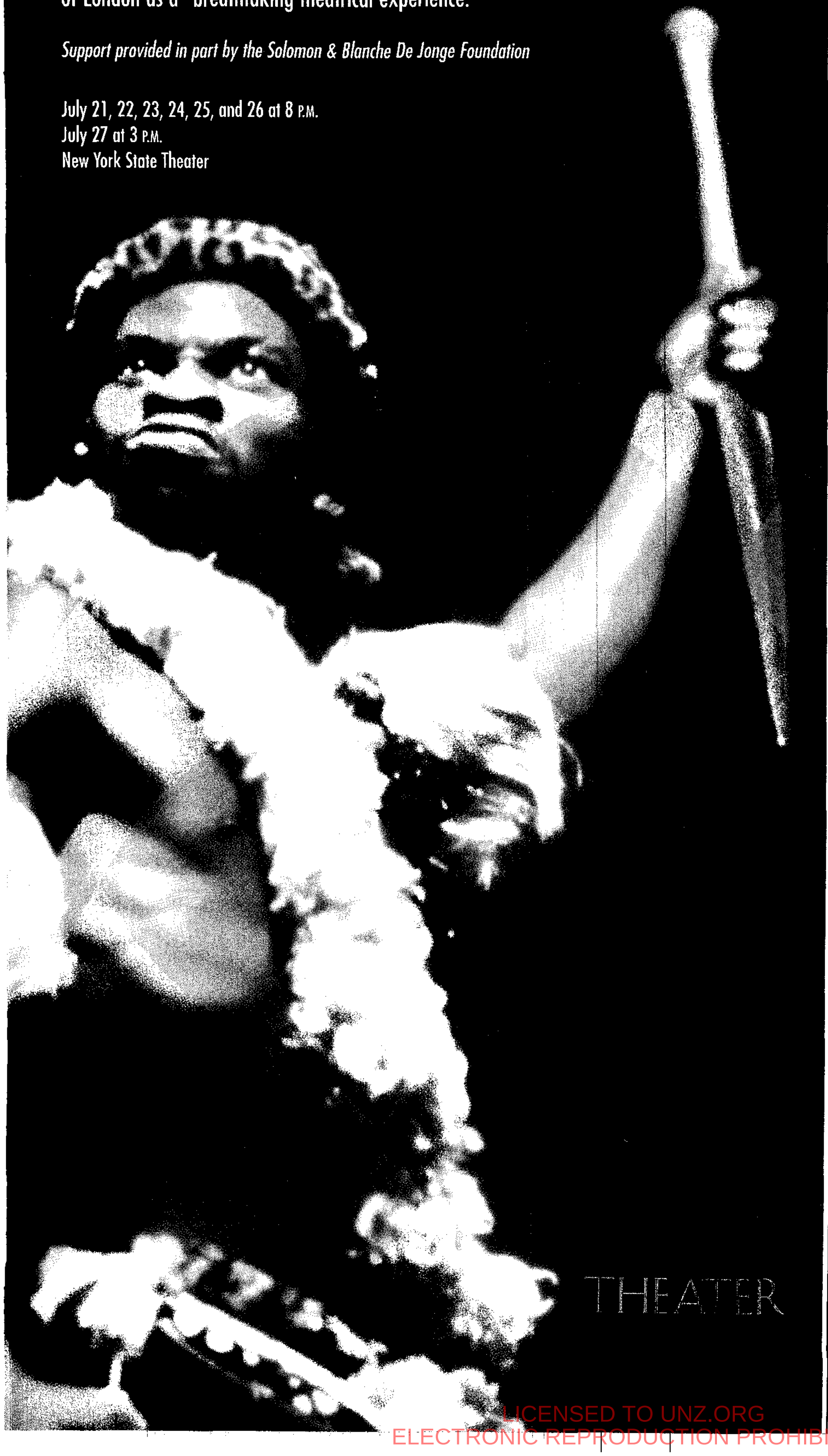
FOR TICKETS, SEE PAGES 20A - 21A

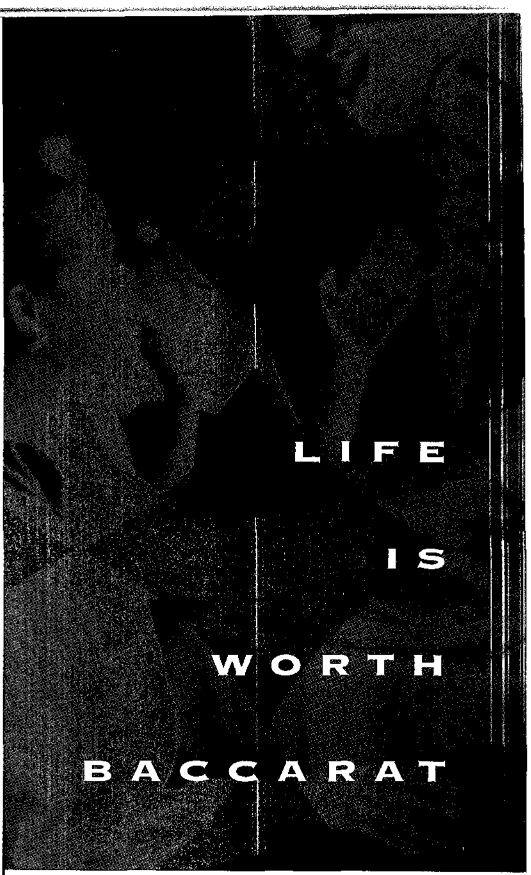
UMABATHA: THE ZULU MACBETH

One of the most celebrated English dramas of all time is transported to the veldt of Africa in Welcome Msomi's "Umabatha: The Zulu Macbeth." First performed more than twenty-five years ago, and here presented in a lavishly revised and expanded version, Shakespeare's familiar tale of greed, betrayal, and murder is not played out amidst the clans of Scotland but among the warring tribes of Africa. As adapted by Msomi, the story of the Scottish thane becomes that of another warrior statesman, Shaka Zulu. Hear the pulsing of the drums and witness this kaleidoscopic production described by *The Guardian* of London as a "breathtaking theatrical experience."

Support provided in part by the Solomon & Blanche De Jonge Foundation

July 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, and 26 at 8 P.M.
July 27 at 3 P.M.
New York State Theater





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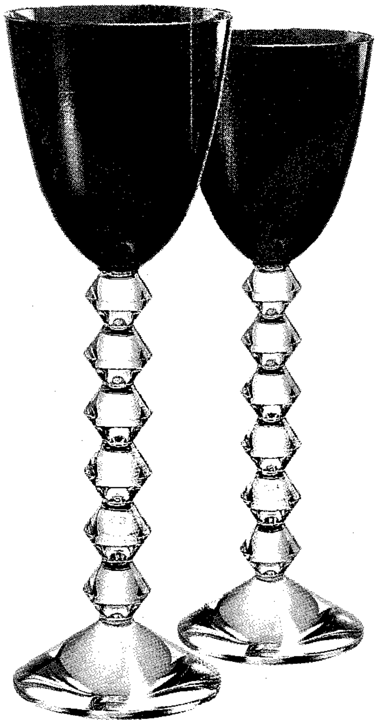

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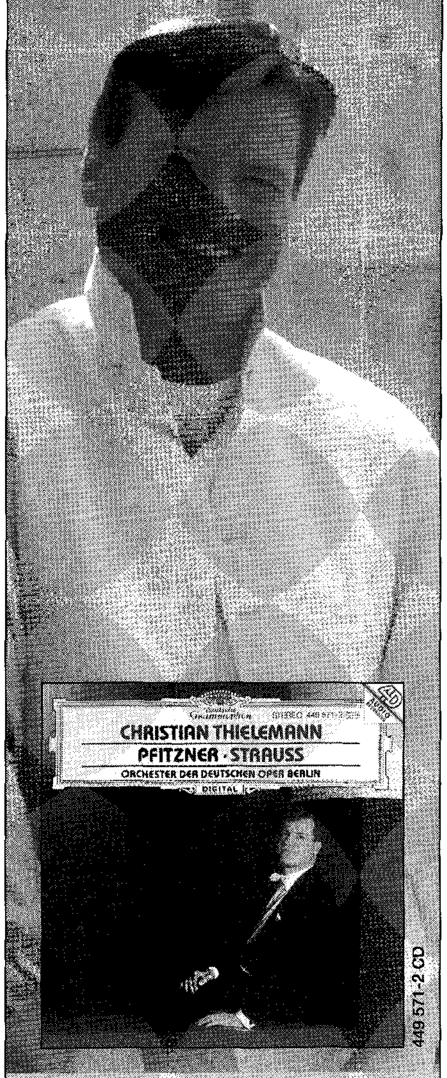

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LINCOLN CENTER FESTIVAL 97

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ORNETTE COLEMAN: ? CIVILIZATION

A HARMOLODIC CELEBRATION

Festival 97 salutes jazz great and living legend Ornette Coleman in a four-day fête that displays the breadth and depth of his extraordinary artistry. Coleman performs in every concert, joined by an all-star lineup of musical talents, including his octet Prime Time in their special expanded Tone Dialing show, notable jazz guests, and the New York Philharmonic, under its music director Kurt Masur.

Program A

New York Philharmonic, Kurt Masur, Music Director/Ornette Coleman and Prime Time
Copland: *Fanfare for the Common Man* and other American classics by various composers
Ornette Coleman: *Skies of America*
July 8 and 9 at 8 P.M. Avery Fisher Hall

Program B

Ornette Coleman with Charlie Haden and Billy Higgins plus special guests
July 10 at 8 P.M. Avery Fisher Hall

Program C

Ornette Coleman: *Tone Dialing* with Ornette Coleman and Prime Time with dancers, rapper and video artists
July 11 at 8 P.M. Avery Fisher Hall

FOR TICKETS, SEE PAGES 20A - 21A

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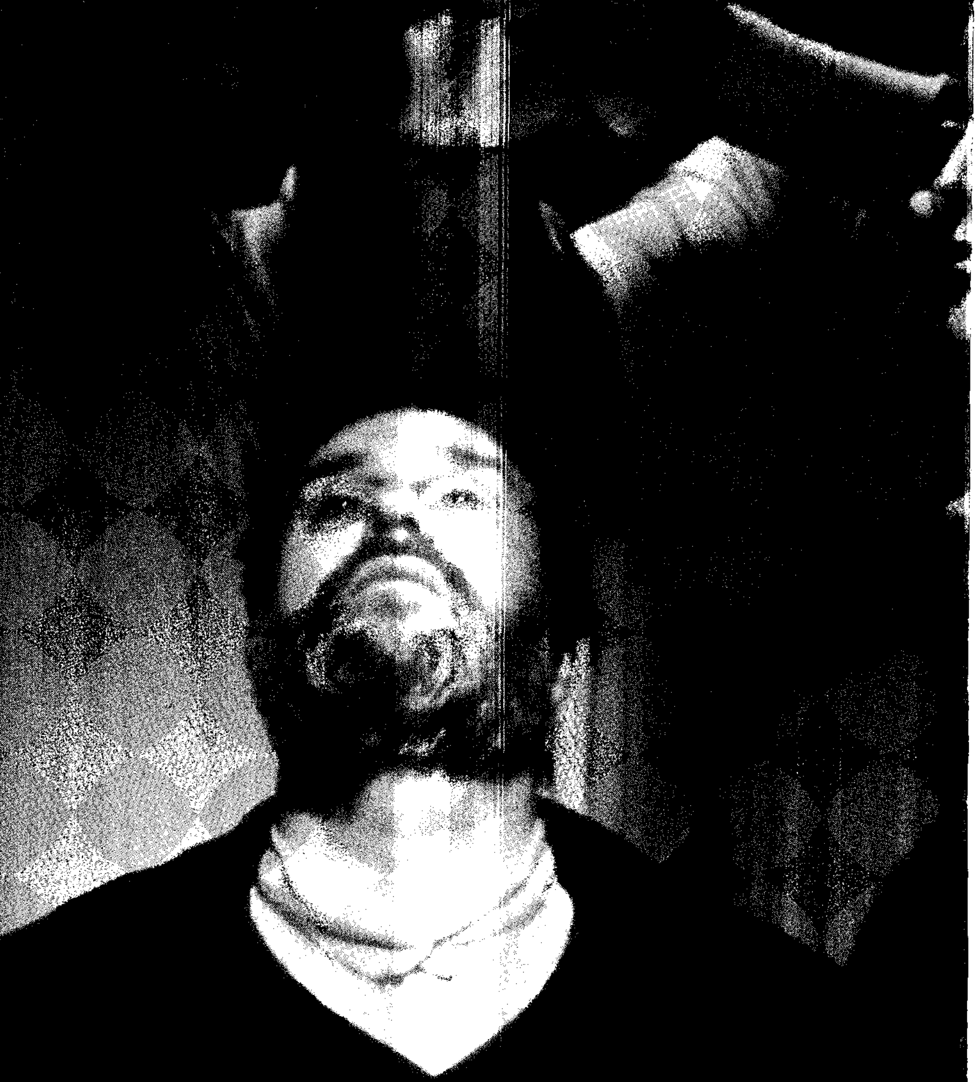

THE ROYAL OPERA

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THE ORCHESTRA OF THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE

PALESTRINA

BY HANS PFITZNER

Christian Thielemann, Conductor
With Thomas Moser as Palestrina and a cast of forty

The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, in its New York debut, brings its lavish production of Hans Pfitzner's epic opera "Palestrina" to New York for its American première. Seen frequently in Germany but never before fully staged in the United States, this Wagnerian paean to the redemptive power of music has been called "a fascinating opera...performed magnificently by an enormous and exceptionally fine cast" *(Daily Telegraph)*. Written while Europe was gripped by the horrors of the First World War, "Palestrina" not only pays tribute to the sixteenth-century composer for whom it is named, but also creates a powerful metaphor for artistic freedom. This luminous drama is conducted by Christian Thielemann, an internationally recognized champion of romantic German music.

July 21, 24, and 26 at 7 P.M. Metropolitan Opera House

Support to Lincoln Center Festival 97 for this presentation provided by Mr. and Mrs. Martin D. Gruss

FOR TICKETS, SEE PAGES 20A - 21A

LINCOLN CENTER FESTIVAL 97

THE ART OF PERFORMANCE: LINCOLN CENTER FESTIVAL 97

PHOTO BY STEPHANIE BERGER

Movado is proud to lend major support to this extraordinary 3-week celebration of music, theatre, dance, and more. July 8 – July 27.

OPERA & BALLET

The Royal Opera
Palestrina by Hans Pfitzner**
Christian Thielemann, conductor with
Thomas Moser as Palestrina

The Royal Ballet
*The Prince of the Pagodas****
Cinderella
Ravel Mixed Program

MUSIC

The New York Philharmonic
Wagner - Currents and Countercurrents
Happy Birthday, Maestro Kurt Masur

The Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center
The Intimate Pfitzner

Pomerium
The World of Palestrina

Ornette Coleman:
? Civilization
The New York Philharmonic
Kurt Masur, Music Director,
Ornette Coleman and Prime Time

Morton Subotnick
*Intimate Immensity**

Expresiones Latinas

Benjamin Bagby's *Beowulf*

THEATER

Silviu Purcarete's production of Aeschylus' *Les Danaïdes***

Umabatha:
The Zulu *Macbeth*

Woza Afrika:
After Apartheid**

PERFORMANCE

Le Cercle Invisible

The Aquarium/Connie Beckley*

Downtown Underground/
Wendy Perron*

Incident at Cobbler's Knob/
The Talent Family
(a/k/a David & Amy Sedaris)*

The Solo Magic Flute/
Christoph Homberger, tenor**

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THE ROYAL BALLET AT THE METROPOLITAN OPERA HOUSE

A co-presentation of Lincoln Center Festival 97 and the Metropolitan Opera.

THE ROYAL BALLET

Sir Anthony Dowell, Director
The Orchestra of the Royal Opera House

THE PRINCE OF THE PAGODAS

Choreography by Sir Kenneth MacMillan
Music by Benjamin Britten

Highlighting the Royal Ballet's Festival repertoire is the New York première of "The Prince of the Pagodas," the last full-length ballet choreographed by the renowned Kenneth MacMillan. Weaving together elements from several fairy tales, "Pagodas" is a "cornucopia of dazzling choreography" *(The Evening Standard of London)* set to Benjamin Britten's only music written specifically for ballet.

July 18, 19, and 27 at 8 P.M.; July 27 at 1:30 P.M. Metropolitan Opera House

RAVEL MIXED PROGRAM

Choreography by Sir Frederick Ashton,
Sir Kenneth MacMillan, and Christopher Wheeldon
Music by Maurice Ravel with The Royal Opera Chorus

Rounding out the Royal Ballet's Festival repertory is a program of diverse shorter ballets set to four of the French composer's finest scores, including "Daphnis and Chloë" and "La Valse." Don't miss this remarkable ensemble company which critics around the globe have called "stunning," "exquisite," and "one of the most tightly knit ensembles in the dance world."

July 22, 23, and 25 at 8 P.M. Metropolitan Opera House

CINDERELLA

Choreography by Sir Frederick Ashton
Music by Sergei Prokofiev

Equally striking is the long-awaited return of Frederick Ashton's "Cinderella" choreographed to Prokofiev's beloved score.

July 20 at 8 P.M.; July 23, 24, and 26 at 1:30 P.M. Metropolitan Opera House

Support to Lincoln Center Festival 97 for this presentation provided by
Bloomberg
NEWS
Mr. and Mrs. Martin D. Gruss
and The Harkness Foundation for Dance

FOR TICKETS, SEE PAGES 20A - 21A

special advertising section

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This very special IST Cultural Tour (July 24 - 27) offers you the opportunity to see rare performances of Britain's celebrated Royal Ballet and Royal Opera. And as a privileged participant in Lincoln Center Festival 97, you'll enjoy much more…

Attend the Royal Opera's "Palestrina," the first fully staged U.S. performance of an opera hailed at its première as "the greatest operatic event since 'Parsifal.'" And enjoy the Royal Ballet's acclaimed "Cinderella" and Ravel programs. Take an exclusive VIP tour…glimpse Festival star performers in rehearsal…visit a treasured antique piano collection. Your host at a welcoming cocktail party will be classical music radio celebrity Jon Tolansky…and you'll have a delightful pre-performance dinner with Jon and "Palestrina" star Robert Tear. Reserve now…spend "A Weekend with the Royals" and put yourself at the center of Lincoln Center's Festival 97 excitement!

Package price per person, including three nights double occupancy hotel accommodations at The Radisson Empire just opposite Lincoln Center is $995. Package price without hotel is $695 per person. For further information or reservations, call 800-833-2111.

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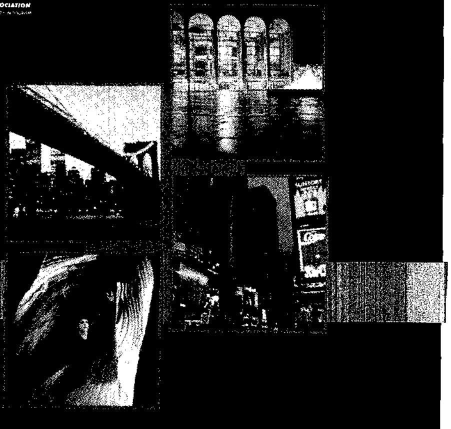

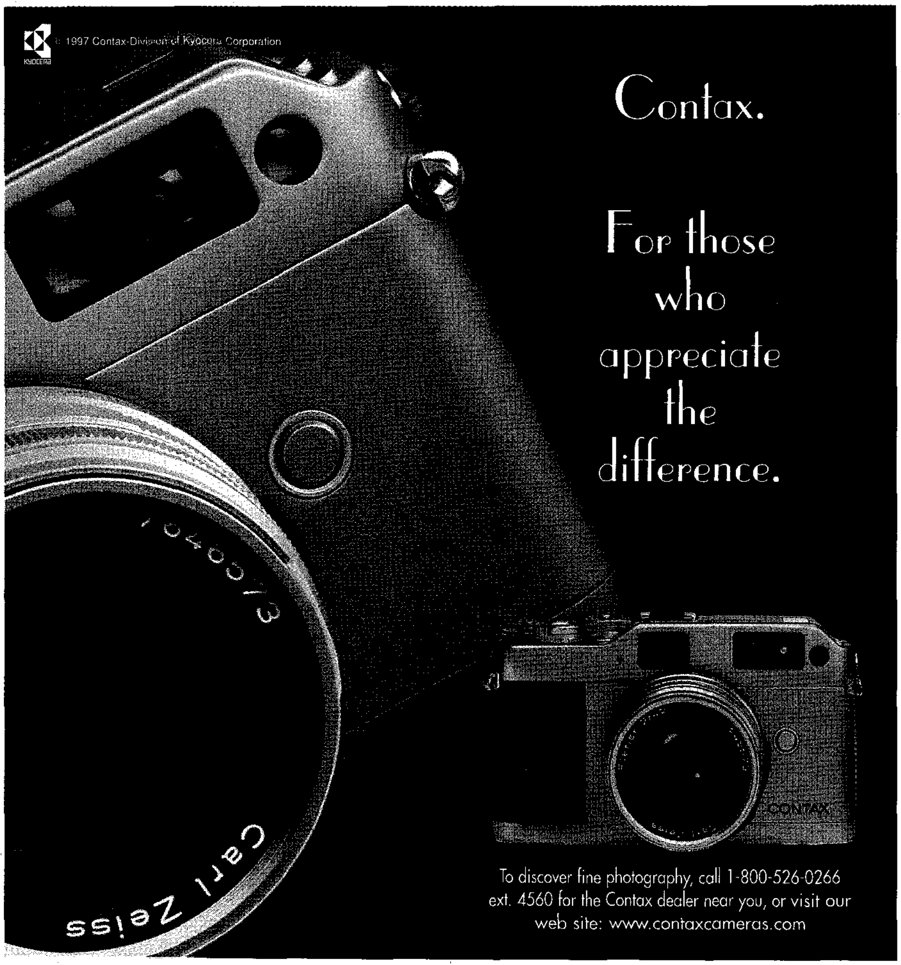

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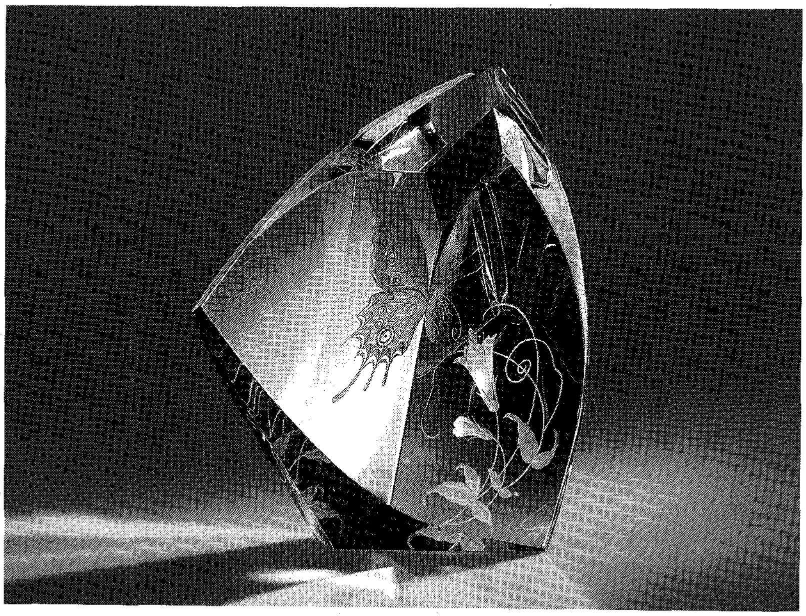

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BENJAMIN BAGBY'S BEOWULF

Here is the story that the thanes, seated on their stools, by the light of their torches, listened to as they drank the ale of their king. It is the epic tale of the knight-errant Beowulf's titanic struggle with the beastly Grendel, who for twelve years devoured men and emptied the mead halls of Old King Hrothgar. In this mystically compelling, solo performance, Benjamin Bagby of the medieval group Sequentia offers a half-spoken, half-sung evocation of one of the greatest epics in the English language. This evening of eloquence and terror is performed in Old English to the accompaniment of medieval harp.

July 20 and 21 at 8 P.M. Kaplan Penthouse

THE SOLO MAGIC FLUTE

Not since Anna Russell's hilarious rendition of Wagner's "Ring" has an opera received such lovingly irreverent treatment as in Christoph Homberger's one-man unaccompanied performance of Mozart's "Magic Flute." This is a side-splittingly funny tour de force, full of insights about the quirks of operatic life and about Mozart's beloved masterpiece itself. Performed in German.

July 14, 16, 17, and 18 at 8 P.M. Alice Tully Hall

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A STAGED MEDIA POEM BY MORTON SUBOTNICK

Composer Morton Subotnick, a pioneer in electronic music, brings us "Intimate Immensity," a staged "media poem" exploring the growing effect of cyberspace on our personal lives. The performers include a godlike cyber-angel whose movements control two electronic pianos, lights, projected images, and sounds, and two singers who face the audience while sitting at computers.

July 16, 18, and 19 at 8 P.M.
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JULY 8-27

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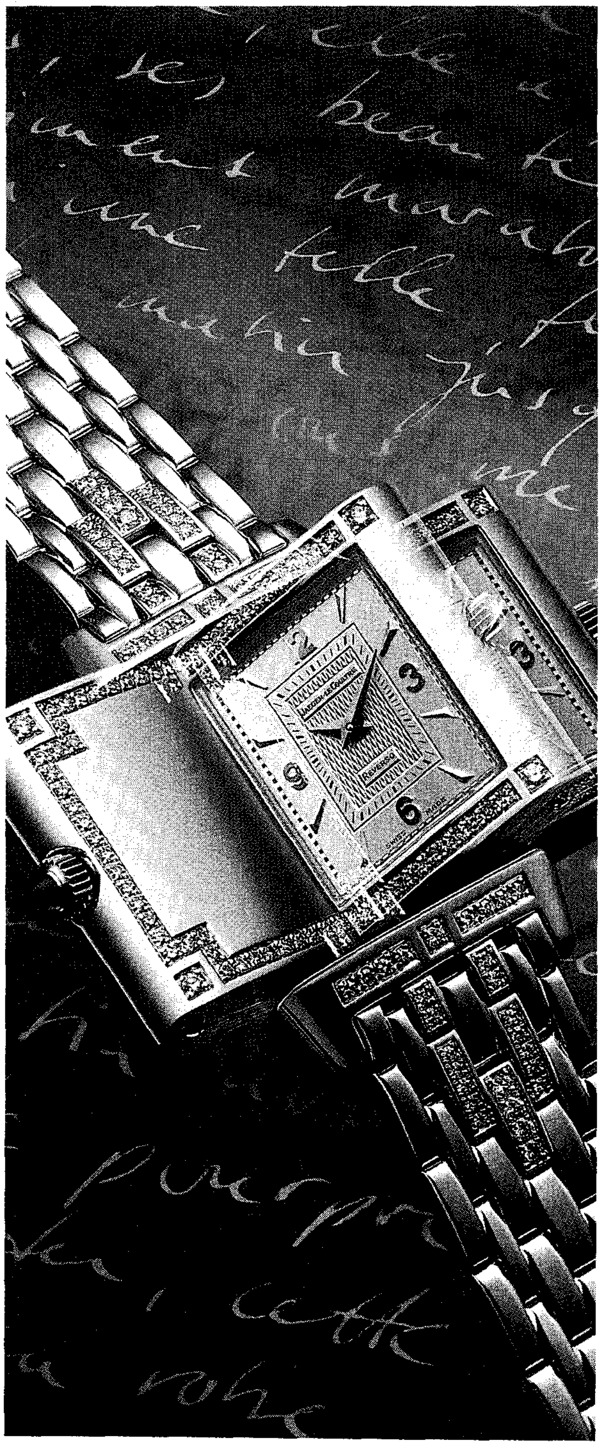

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THE AQUARIUM: A MEDITATION ON LIFE IN THE CITY
TEXT, MUSIC, AND SET BY CONNIE BECKLEY

Q: When does the ordinary become the extraordinary? A: In performance artist Connie Beckley's latest work, "The Aquarium. This series of twelve original poems set to music creates a surreal metropolis in which anything can happen. Beckley takes probing look at big city life in this, her newest ensemble work.
July 22, 24, and 26 at 8 P.M. Clark Studio Theater

DOWNTOWN UNDERGROUND
THE WENDY PERRON PROJECT

A crowded subway platform is inspiration for choreographer Wendy Perron. In her new full-length work "Downtow Underground," common subway scenes provide a starting point for the dance sequences. Take an exciting ride with an artis *Dance Magazine* calls a "choreographer of roaring originality."
July 13, 15, and 17 at 8 P.M. LaGuardia Theater

Presented in association with Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School for Music & Art and the Performing Arts

Support provided in part by The Harkness Foundation for Dance

LE CERCLE INVISIBLE

A magical blend of slapstick, vaudeville, and performance art, Le Cercle Invisible is the enchanting creation of husband-an wife team Victoria Chaplin and Jean-Baptiste Thierrée. They have spent twenty years refining their unique act, in whic larger-than-life bluster defers to the miniature and subtly bizarre, creating "a dream circus full of wondrous eccentricities *(The Financial Times).*
July 22, 23, 24, and 25 at 7 P.M.; July 26 at 2 P.M. John Jay College Theater

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INCIDENT AT COBBLER'S KNOB
THE TALENT FAMILY

Leave it to brother-and-sister team Amy and David Sedaris—aka the Talent Family—to create a play with a worm as th protagonist. The Talent Family's latest whimsical work promises to be yet another hit. Critics praised the Talent Family's play as "quick-witted" and "slashingly funny," and David Sedaris' humorous essays and books have won him a growing audienc
July 8 at 8:30 P.M.; July 9, 10, and 11 at 8 P.M. LaGuardia Theater

Presented in association with Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School for Music & Art and the Performing Arts

THE NEW YORK VIDEO FESTIVAL

Once again The Film Society of Lincoln Center teams up with Lincoln Center Festival to present the much-acclaimed New Yor Video Festival—a leading showcase for new works representing all genres of electronic moving images. Dates: July 18th - 24t Tickets will be available starting July 1st at the Walter Reade Box Office (165 West 65th Street; 212-875-5600).

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For pueblos del mundo, the music of the Americas defines what's hot in today's music world. Festival 97 celebrates the ri traditions and contemporary styles of Latin music in a festival within the festival, featuring musical artists from Brazi Colombia, Mexico, Cuba, Venezuela, Argentina, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico. A full schedule for the Expresione Latinas concerts will be available in June.

FOR TICKETS, SEE PAGES 20A - 21A

PERFORMANCE

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FESTIVAL 97

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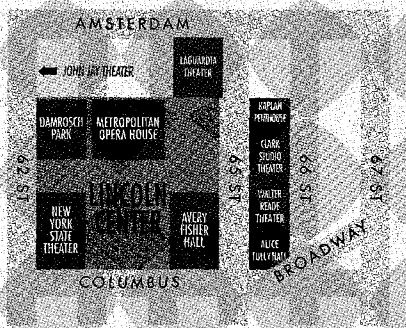

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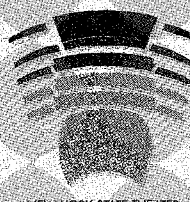

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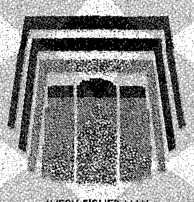

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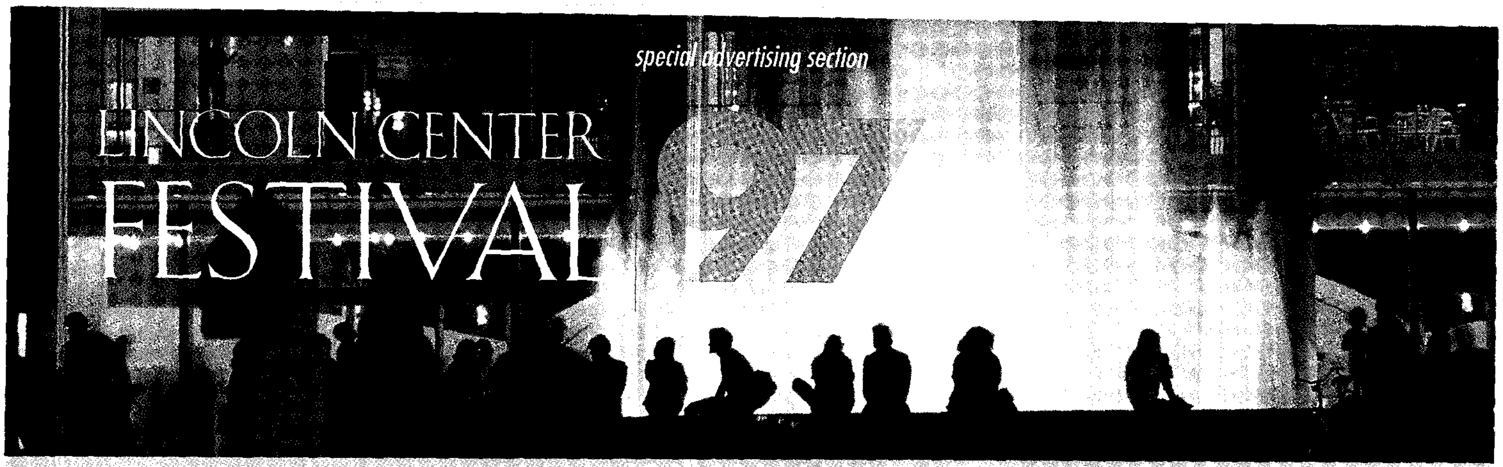

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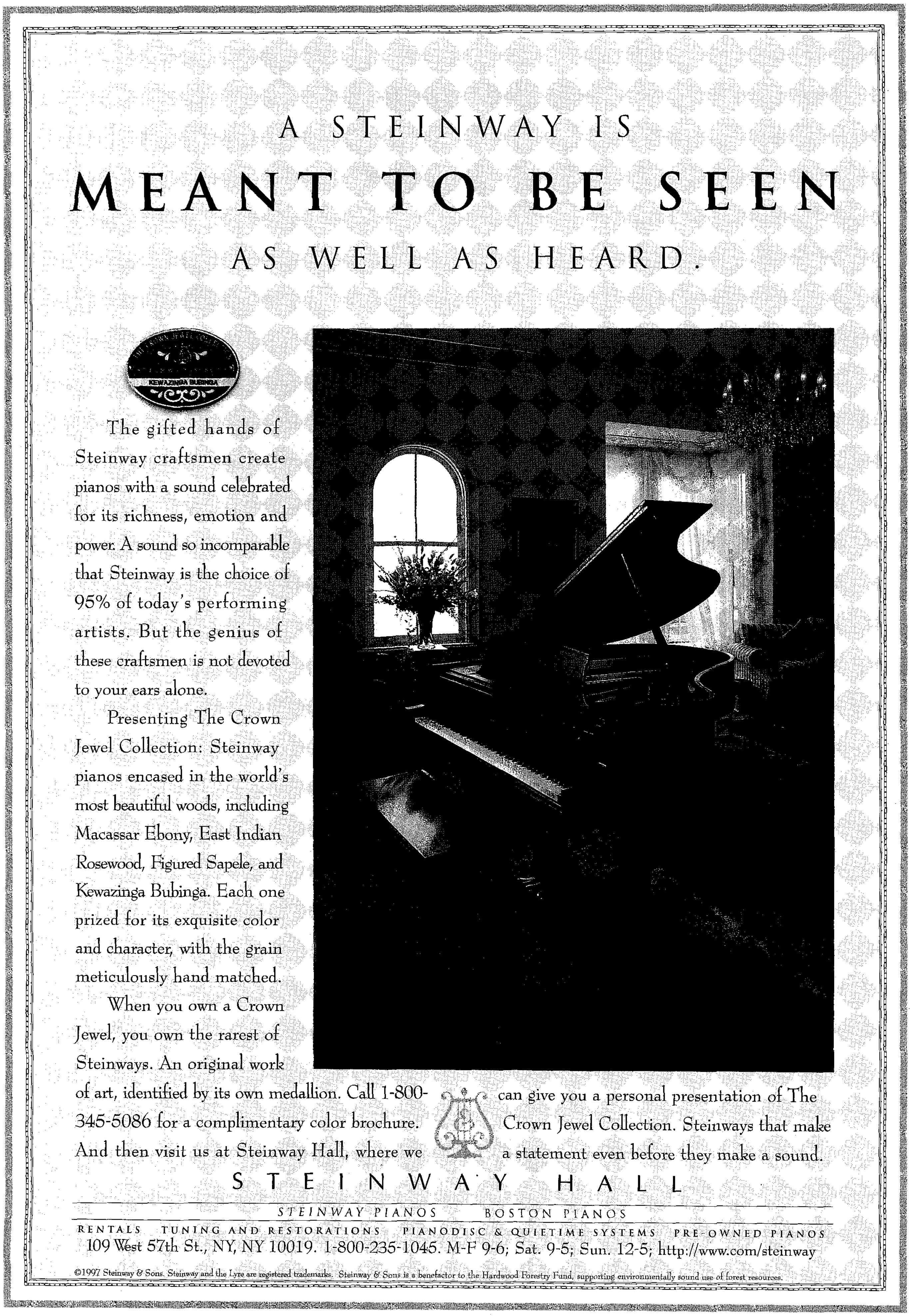
Writer: Ira Rosenblum is the author of *The New York Book of Music*. His articles on music and the arts have appeared in *The New York Times* and other publications.



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Mégret in Vitrolles, but he was running late, so I found a kiosk and bought a copy of *National Hebdo*, the National Front weekly, and sat down to read it outside City Hall, where there's an area of open concrete called Place Nelson Mandela. The lead articles that week were all devoted to unmasking "the anti-Le Pen conspiracy." A lot of attention was paid to a famous interview, in which Le Pen was reported to have said that President Chirac was controlled by international Jewry and the Freemasons, through the agency of the B'nai B'rith. *National Hebdo* claimed that Le Pen was misquoted, but elsewhere the paper maintained that such a Judeo-Masonic cabal does exert great influence over the French government.

Under the heading "IS FRIENDSHIP POSSIBLE WITH THE JEWS?" the paper's editorial director, Martin Peltier, explained that it is not just reasonable but prudent to believe in conspiracies, and that Jews are behind the worst of them. But while Jews are generally "globalists and communists," and "individuals mired in the trickery of dual allegiance or fantasies of pseudo-identity," Peltier urged that "friendship with national Jews, who accept their nationality, is possible, easy and desirable; in particular with our compatriots, the patriotic Jews."

I read on, tripping over words and phrases—"cosmopolitans," "vagabond," "non-civic," "Manhattan," "Judaism perverted by global organizations." Then I went into City Hall to see Bruno Mégret.

I WANTED to know how the National Front proposed to carry out the deportation of millions of immigrants. I'd had a phone conversation about *la crise* with the writer John Berger, an Englishman who has lived in France for over thirty years, and at one point he said, "Doubt itself longs for a kind of action because doubt is impotent. And Le Pen's lies go less noticed because some of what he is offering is this action."

So far, however, the Front's scope for the kind of direct action it promises has been limited. In the major Front strongholds, Toulon and Orange, the mayors had cut funds for social work and cultural programs, and the money had been funnelled to recipients sympathetic to the Front. Toulon's annual sculpture symposium was replaced by a beauty pageant, and when the judges at the local book fair wanted to give their annual prize to the Jewish writer Marek Halter, the National Front mayor made an unprecedented intervention, deciding to offer the prize instead to Brigitte Bardot, the actress and animal-rights activist and great Le Pen crony, who had just published her autobiography. (Bardot ultimately declined the honor.) In Orange, the pattern was similar: deep cuts to immigrant aid; a priest upbraided by the mayor for a sermon out of step with Front thinking; a moratorium on the purchase of books about North Africa by the public library. But this was all tinkering next to what Bruno Mégret had in mind.

Mégret, who is a graduate of several élite schools (including the University of California at Berkeley), is a small, fastidious man, twenty-one years younger than Le Pen, and he told me that the Front "is destined" to govern France. He lacks his boss's charisma, but his colorlessness is regarded as a mask by his opponents; they call Mégret the most dangerous man in the Front—a label he takes as something of a compliment. So I asked Mégret what, exactly, the plan was for getting rid of the immigrants.

I used the word "expulsion." Mégret corrected me. "Return," he said. "The return of immigrants to their original countries will facilitate solving many problems." It would, for instance, save public money, "solve the problem of a threatened national identity," and "promote national cohesion." It would also "solve the problem of security," and "it would certainly be the solution for unemployment." Of course, such a return would be only a first step toward reclaiming France. Mégret said, "It does not suffice as the only solution."

I wondered if he had in mind any examples of countries that had succeeded in improving their lot by cleansing themselves of resident subpopulations. He didn't. In contemporary Europe, he said, "it's a new phenomenon," and he added, "France is at the head of this affair." It might take as long as seven years, Mégret told me, but he was "completely persuaded that it would be perfectly possible to organize the return of at least three million immigrants to their countries of origin," and that this could be done "with-

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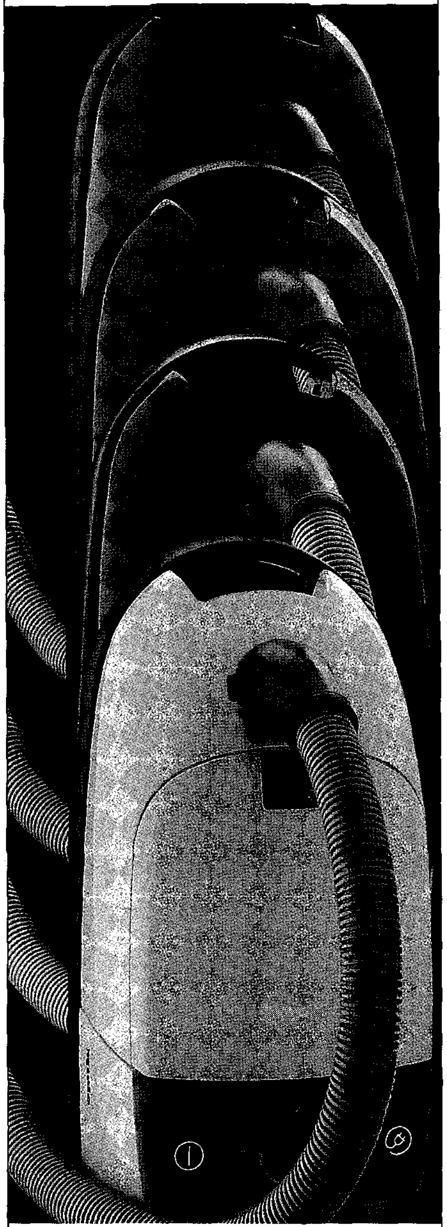

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out major disturbance, and with respect for human dignity, in which we believe."

It sounded painless enough: residency cards would be invalidated, people would be told to go, and they'd go. Such measures would be, Mégret said, "perfectly legitimate." But I wondered, What if something went wrong? What if people put up resistance? "It won't be like that," Mégret said. "It won't happen like that." On the contrary, he advised me, "there could be violence if we do not put our policy into effect."

DURING the Nazi occupation of France, from 1940 until 1945, a great many French people, particularly among the peasant and working classes, resisted in a quiet way by sheltering Jews. Two-thirds of the French Jews survived. Even so, some seventy-seven thousand Jews were rounded up and sent east to death camps. Strikingly, between half and three-quarters of the deportees from France were foreign-born. The quisling French state in Vichy had passed retroactive legislation, aimed largely at recent Jewish refugees, revoking French nationality from anyone who had acquired it after 1934. As the Bulgarian-born French critic and philosopher Tzvetan Todorov said to me, "During the war, French anti-Semitism was, in fact, much more xenophobic than racist."

This is a distinction of great importance to the heterodox Parisian sociologist Emmanuel Todd, who told me that the French cannot be considered racist according to "a strict definition of racism," because that requires a belief in "essential biological differences." Instead, Todd said, he found that "the French react violently to cultural differences." Mégret had told me, somewhat wishfully, that the immigration debate, and the rise of the Front, reflect a new ideological conflict in French politics—not left versus right, but nationalist versus internationalist. Todd thought the debate was more properly about France's ability, and inclination, to assimilate its new Arab populations.

The French love to remind you that they invented the idea of human rights and that their republican culture is a universalist culture. "Universalism," as Todd put it to me, "means that people are the same everywhere." American universalism is a political principle, which holds that the best form of government is one in which all people are equal before the law. French universalism is much more extravagant: it is a cultural view, and what it boils down to is that people everywhere should be the same as the French, or at the very least should want to be—especially if they're in France. "Multiculturalism," Todorov observed, "has never had any currency here." The republican idea of assimilation is absolutist.

"And what happens?" Todd said, speaking of the North African immigration. "People arrive who are basically of the white race but with very different mores," people "whose behavior you find incomprehensible," and "you act as if these strangers are not human." The response is one of "exclusion, and hostility," Todd went on. "It's the contrary of racism—just as serious, but totally contrary."

A third of France's legal-immigrant population comes from Muslim countries, predominantly in North Africa, and two-thirds of the French people regularly tell polltakers that they think there are too many Arabs and Muslims in France. While the National Front picks up votes by insisting that pork should remain on school menus, even people with impeccable "antiracist" credentials agree with a 1994 ban against female students wearing the Islamic veil. Some argue that the veil is demeaning to the women, but in the eyes of many others it is France that is demeaned by the spectacle of a woman who doesn't want to dress like Juliette Binoche. Neighborly feelings are not improved, either, when Algeria's civil war spills over into the streets of France in the form of terrorist bombings.

Immigration is an increasingly vexed subject throughout Europe, and for some time the trend has been toward greater restrictions. France has not seen the kind of programmatic violence against foreigners that has been frequent in Germany, nor has it experienced an emergency influx such as Italy recently had from Albania. In fact, the number of immigrants in France has remained proportionally constant, at around six per cent of the population, since the thirties. But until the late sixties the great majority of immigrants were from other predominantly Catholic countries in Europe. Then the aftershocks of decolonization began to be felt, just as France's thriving economy had a need for manual laborers. Le Pen likes to say that France is now being "invaded" by people from the sorts of places France used to invade. "Do you know, ladies and gentlemen, that today the majority of immigrants that come to France are not, contrary to what you believe, Africans—

page 63, Fodor's Gold Guide Paris

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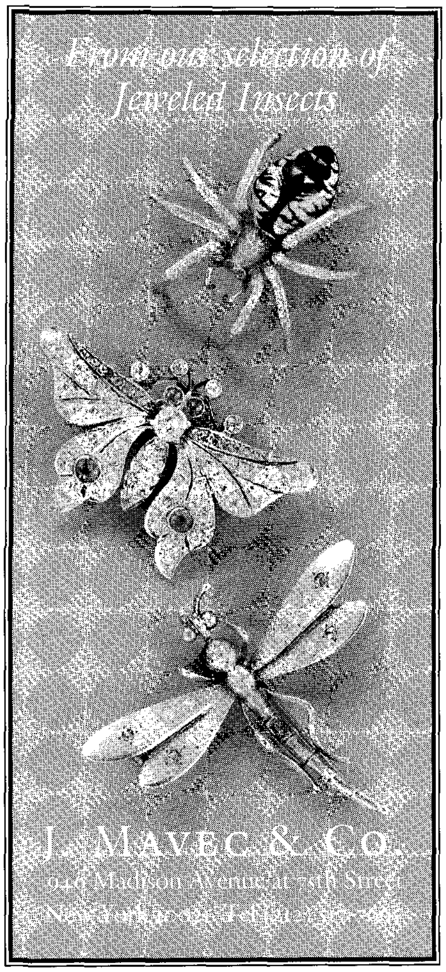

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North Africans?" he asked at a rally last December. "They are Asians, Turks, Pakistanis. . . ." He hefted himself forward, and spat out the words: "People from Bangladesh, Vietnam, China . . ."

Late last year, Chirac's minister of the interior, Jean-Louis Debré, submitted a package of new immigration regulations to the French parliament. The Debré law was billed as part of a clampdown on illegal immigration, and its Article 1 required French residents to get written permission before overnight visits from foreigners requiring visas and to inform their mayor's office after such guests departed. The idea of citizen-informants stirred bad memories of Vichy. A protest movement began. There were marches, and petitions vowing civil disobedience. In late February, tens of thousands of people took to the streets of Paris in a festive demonstration against the law and what was described as the general *lepenization* of the French spirit.

That the Debré law was an attempt by the Chirac government to steal the National Front's thunder was a point on which Le Pen and the protesters agreed. "Without doubt, without doubt," Le Pen told me, adding, "They are obliged to make an effort in the direction of millions of citizens, who are unhappy with the present situation, who consider that the country is not well run, in this respect as in others." In the end, the controversial provision was removed, even though opinion polls showed that nearly seventy per cent of French voters supported it.

"We live in a truly terrible time, because we are seeing the rebirth of Fascism, and because unfortunately in the face of it anti-Fascism has become crazy," the writer and social commentator Alain Finkielkraut told me one afternoon in Paris. He said, "One speaks of the *lepenization* of the spirit, but I think this *lepenization* of the spirit is made by those who pay so much attention to it, who are totally obsessed by it. There's a complete overexcitement."

The Front was certainly receiving the reward of a staggering amount of hostile publicity in March, as France absorbed the Mégrets' victory in Vitrolles and argued about the Debré law. In article after article—often two or three in each of the major dailies—and in the speeches of one major politician after another, the rise of the Front had begun to appear less as a symptom of *la crise* than as its cause. There was some justice in this view. But Finkielkraut feared a rhetorical meltdown. "The overexcitement I speak of," he said, "is when people say that Debré equals Le Pen equals Pétain equals Hitler. It's an idiocy."

It has never been exactly clear where to locate the sober center of the public debate about the legacy of Vichy and the occupation. Now the memory was being invoked to say both "Here we go again" and "This isn't that, so it must not be so bad." It wasn't even one memory, as Claude Lanzmann, who made the movie "Shoah," observed when I met him at his home in Paris. We were talking about how Pétain, before he became the chief of Vichy, had been the victor of Verdun in the First World War, and how despite Vichy he remained celebrated as a hero of that other time. "There are two memories, and they are not the same," Lanzmann said. That difference may never be reconciled, but, for better or worse, the rise of the National Front may be flushing it into the open for more of a public reckoning than it has ever received so far.

In the months immediately after the liberation, more than ten thousand reputed French collaborators were purged in a frenzy of vigilante justice. "I witnessed these summary trials, and then the guys were taken immediately into the woods and executed," Lanzmann told me, adding, "So there was a purification that was very, very real." Then General de Gaulle dropped the curtain. He called a halt to the killings and declared, in effect, that France had been a nation of resistance. The Pétain regime was officially regarded as an alien germ that had been rejected by the true France, and "Vichy" became again the safe name of a popular mineral water. The myth of nearly universal resistance served the purposes of national unity, and the great majority of the people on either side of the Vichy divide recognized the expediency of believing in it.

Mitterrand, who had indulged in a youthful flirtation with Pétain before joining the Resistance, would not touch the question. The Republic, he said, "did what she had to." It wasn't until July 16, 1995, that Jacques Chirac became the first postwar French President to challenge the illusion. "Yes," Chirac said, "the criminal folly of the occupier was seconded by the French people, by the French state. Yes—it's indisputable—there is a collective fault." France, he said, "accomplished the irreparable."

Le Pen seized the occasion to remark, "I fear that Chirac's initiative will be an instrument of war against France and its national unity." The same words might have been spoken by de Gaulle or by a Pétainist; in one sentence, Le Pen had managed to insinuate himself into both memories, and to set them at odds with each other anew.

ONE of the National Front's favorite formulas these days is "Neither Right nor Left . . . French!" But Le Pen's career has followed a clear course to the extreme right since the late forties, when he was a street-brawling law-student leader in Paris, where he fell in with the Action Française crowd of hard-core Pétainists. In 1954, he enlisted as a paratrooper to fight in Indochina, where he arrived shortly after the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu. Back in France, he joined forces with Pierre Poujade, the populist leader of a xenophobic, ultranationalist, anti-tax crusade. The Poujadists enjoyed a freak victory at the polls in 1956, landing Le Pen a seat in the National Assembly, but he resigned the seat about a year later to go fight in Algeria. He has been publicly accused of torturing prisoners there—a charge he has denied.

After the French retreat from North Africa, Le Pen started a business whose best-known company specialized in recording anthologies of military songs, including some infamous compilations of Nazi lyrics. In 1965, he worked for the Presidential campaign of Jean-Louis Tixier-Vigancour, who won five per cent of the vote. Then the extreme right went into remission. Le Pen had three daughters, organized the National Front, got divorced (his bitter ex-wife posed for European *Playboy* in a French maid's uniform), and remarried. In the European parliamentary elections of 1984, the Front tapped deep fears with its anti-internationalist campaign, and bounced out of obscurity to secure nearly eleven per cent of the vote.

During the Presidential campaign of 1995, the Front published a booklet called "Passionately French: The Life of Jean-Marie Le Pen in Cartoon Strips." In it, the rise of an impoverished war orphan (Le Pen's father's fishing boat was sunk by a mine) to the status of messianic candidate for national salvation appears both inevitable and inexorable. But there is no explanation of how such a political super-

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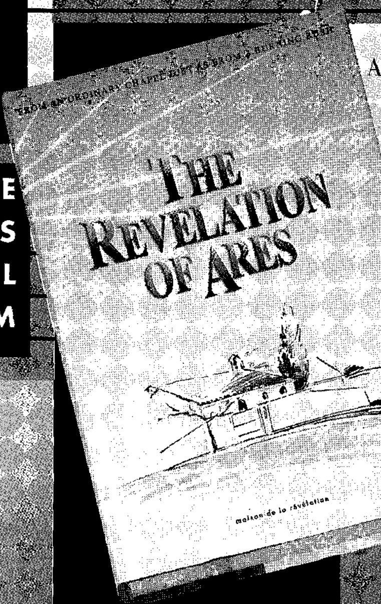

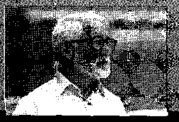

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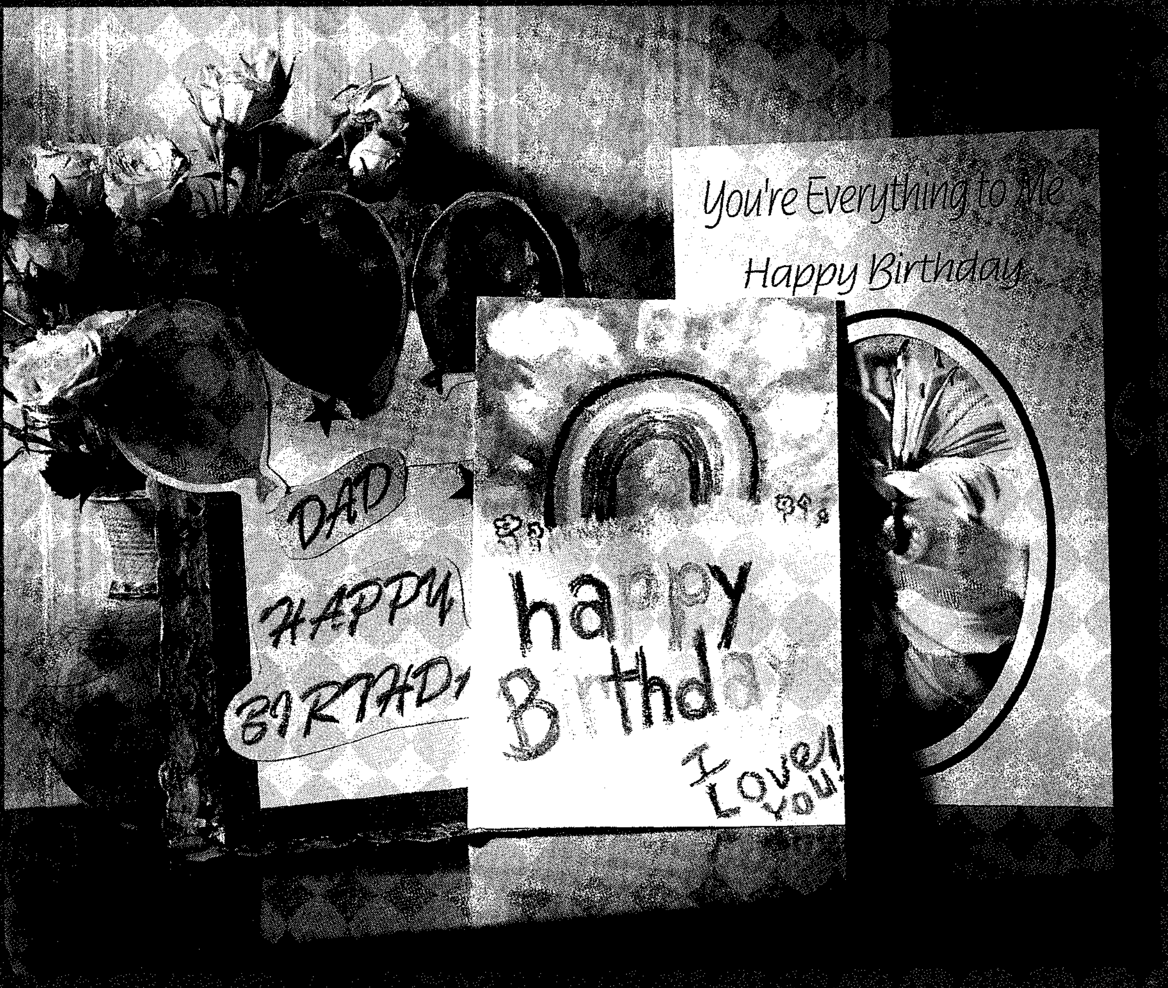
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CONTRAINDICATIONS: Hypersensitivity to any component of this medication. Active liver disease or unexplained, persistent elevations in liver function tests (see **WARNINGS**). *Pregnancy and lactation.* Atherosclerosis is a chronic process and discontinuation of lipid-lowering drugs during pregnancy should have little impact on the outcome of long-term therapy of primary hypercholesterolemia. Cholesterol and other products of cholesterol biosynthesis are essential components for fetal development (including synthesis of steroids and cell membranes). Since HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors decrease cholesterol synthesis and possibly the synthesis of other biologically active substances derived from cholesterol, they may cause fetal harm when administered to pregnant women. Therefore, HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors are contraindicated during pregnancy and in nursing mothers. **Pravastatin should be administered to women of childbearing age only when such patients are highly unlikely to conceive and have been informed of the potential hazards.** If the patient becomes pregnant while taking this class of drug, therapy should be discontinued and the patient apprised of the potential hazard to the fetus. **WARNINGS: Liver Enzymes —** HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors, like some other lipid-lowering therapies, have been associated with biochemical abnormalities of liver function. Increases of serum transaminase (ALT, AST) values to more than 3 times the upper limit of normal occurring on 2 or more (not necessarily sequential) occasions have been reported in 1.3% of patients treated with pravastatin in the US over an average period of 18 months. These abnormalities were not associated with cholestasis and did not appear to be related to treatment duration. In those patients in whom these abnormalities were believed to be related to pravastatin and who were discontinued from therapy, the transaminase levels usually fell slowly to pretreatment levels. These biochemical findings are usually asymptomatic although worldwide experience indicates that anorexia, weakness, and/or abdominal pain may also be present in rare patients. **It is recommended that liver function tests be performed before the initiation of treatment, at 6 and 12 weeks after initiation of therapy or elevation in dose, and periodically thereafter (e.g., semiannually).** Patients who develop increased transaminase levels should be monitored with a second liver function evaluation to confirm the finding and be followed thereafter with frequent liver function tests until the abnormality(ies) return to normal. Should an increase in AST or ALT of three times the upper limit of normal or greater persist, withdrawal of pravastatin therapy is recommended. Active liver disease or unexplained transaminase elevations are contraindications to the use of pravastatin (see **CONTRAINDICATIONS**). Caution should be exercised when *pravastatin is administered to patients with a history of liver disease or heavy alcohol ingestion (see* ***CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY: Pharmacokinetics/Metabolism****). Such patients should be closely monitored*, started at the lower end of the recommended dosing range, and titrated to the desired therapeutic effect. **Skeletal Muscle — Rare cases of rhabdomyolysis with acute renal failure secondary to *myoglobinuria have been reported with pravastatin and other drugs in this class.*** *Uncomplicated* myalgia has also been reported in pravastatin-treated patients (see **ADVERSE REACTIONS**). Myopathy, defined as muscle aching or muscle weakness in conjunction with increases in creatine phosphokinase (CPK) values to greater than 10 times the upper normal limit, was rare (< 0.1%) in pravastatin clinical trials. *Myopathy should be considered in any patient with diffuse myalgias, muscle tenderness or weakness, and/or* marked elevation of CPK. Patients should be advised to report promptly unexplained muscle pain, tenderness or weakness, particularly if accompanied by malaise or fever. **Pravastatin therapy should be discontinued if markedly elevated CPK levels occur or myopathy is diagnosed or suspected. Pravastatin therapy *should also be temporarily withheld in any patient experiencing an acute or serious condition* predisposing to the development of renal failure secondary to rhabdomyolysis, e.g., sepsis; hypotension; major surgery; trauma; severe metabolic, endocrine, or electrolyte disorders; or uncontrolled epilepsy.** The risk of myopathy during treatment with another HMG-CoA reductase inhibitor is *increased with concurrent therapy with either erythromycin, cyclosporine, niacin, or fibrates. However, neither* myopathy nor significant increases in CPK levels have been observed in three reports involving a total of 100 post-transplant patients (24 renal and 76 cardiac) treated for up to two years concurrently with pravastatin 10-40 mg and cyclosporine. Some of these patients also received other concomitant immunosuppressive therapies. *In one single-dose study, pravastatin levels were found to be increased in cardiac transplant* patients receiving cyclosporine. Further, in clinical trials involving small numbers of patients who were treated concurrently with pravastatin and niacin, there were no reports of myopathy. Also, myopathy was not reported in a trial of combination pravastatin (40 mg/day) and gemfibrozil (1200 mg/day), although 4 of 75 patients *on the combination showed marked* CPK elevations versus one of 73 patients receiving placebo. There was a trend toward more frequent CPK elevations and patient withdrawals due to musculoskeletal symptoms in the group receiving combined treatment as compared with the groups receiving placebo, gemfibrozil, or pravastatin monotherapy (see **PRECAUTIONS: Drug Interactions**). **The use of fibrates alone may occasionally be associated with myopathy. The combined use of pravastatin and fibrates should be avoided unless the benefit of further alterations in lipid levels is likely to outweigh the increased risk of this drug combination. PRECAUTIONS: General —** Pravastatin may elevate creatinine phosphokinase and transaminase levels (see **ADVERSE REACTIONS**). This should be considered in the differential diagnosis of chest pain in a patient on therapy with pravastatin. *Homozygous Familial Hypercholesterolemia.* Pravastatin has not been evaluated in patients with rare homozygous familial hypercholesterolemia. In this group of patients, it has been reported that HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors are less effective because the patients lack functional LDL receptors. *Renal Insufficiency.* A single 20 mg oral dose of pravastatin was administered to 24 patients with varying degrees of renal impairment (as determined by creatinine clearance). No effect was observed on the pharmacokinetics of pravastatin or its 3α-hydroxy isomeric metabolite (SQ 31,906). A small increase was seen in mean AUC values and half-life ($t^{1}/_{2}$) for the inactive enzymatic ring hydroxylation metabolite (SQ 31,945). Given this small sample size, the dosage administered, and the degree of individual variability, patients with renal impairment who are receiving pravastatin should be closely monitored. **Information for Patients —** Patients should be advised to report promptly unexplained muscle pain, tenderness or weakness, particularly if accompanied by malaise or fever. **Drug Interactions —** *Immunosuppressive Drugs, Gemfibrozil, Niacin (Nicotinic Acid), Erythromycin:* See **WARNINGS: Skeletal Muscle**. *Antipyrine:* Since concomitant administration of pravastatin had no effect on the clearance of antipyrine, interactions with other drugs metabolized via the same hepatic cytochrome isozymes are not expected. *Cholestyramine/Colestipol:* Concomitant administration resulted in an approximately 40 to 50% decrease in the mean AUC of pravastatin. However, when pravastatin was administered 1 hour before or 4 hours after cholestyramine or 1 hour before colestipol and a standard meal, there was no clinically significant decrease in bioavailability or therapeutic effect. (See **DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION: Concomitant Therapy**.) *Warfarin:* In a study involving 10 healthy male subjects given pravastatin and warfarin concomitantly for 6 days, bioavailability parameters at steady state for pravastatin (parent compound) were not altered. Pravastatin did not alter the plasma protein-binding of warfarin. Concomitant dosing did increase the AUC and Cmax of warfarin but did not produce any changes in its anticoagulant action (*i.e.*, no increase was seen in mean prothrombin time after 6 days of concomitant therapy). However, bleeding and extreme prolongation of prothrombin time has been reported with another drug in this class. Patients receiving warfarin-type anticoagulants should have their prothrombin times closely monitored when pravastatin is initiated or the dosage of pravastatin is changed. *Cimetidine:* The $AUC_{0\text{-}12\ hr}$ for pravastatin when given with cimetidine was not significantly different from the AUC for pravastatin when given alone. A significant difference was observed between the AUC's for pravastatin when given with cimetidine compared to when administered with antacid. *Digoxin:* In a crossover trial involving 18 healthy *male subjects given pravastatin and digoxin concurrently for 9 days, the bioavailability parameters of digoxin* were not affected. The AUC of pravastatin tended to increase, but the overall bioavailability of pravastatin plus its metabolites SQ 31,906 and SQ 31,945 was not altered. *Cyclosporine:* Some investigators have measured cyclosporine levels in patients on pravastatin, and to date, these results indicate no clinically meaningful elevations in cyclosporine levels. *In one single-dose study, pravastatin levels were found to be increased in* cardiac transplant patients receiving cyclosporine. *Gemfibrozil:* In a crossover study in 20 healthy male volunteers given concomitant single doses of pravastatin and gemfibrozil, there was a significant decrease in urinary excretion and protein binding of pravastatin. In addition, there was a significant increase in AUC, Cmax, and Tmax *for the pravastatin metabolite* SQ 31,906. *Combination therapy with pravastatin and* gemfibrozil is generally not recommended. In interaction studies with *aspirin, antacids* (1 hour prior to PRAVACHOL), *cimetidine, nicotinic acid,* or *probucol*, no statistically significant differences in bioavailability were seen when PRAVACHOL (pravastatin sodium) was administered. *Other Drugs:* During clinical trials, no *noticeable drug interactions were reported when* PRAVACHOL *was added to:* diuretics, antihypertensives, digitalis, ACE inhibitors, calcium channel blockers, beta-blockers, or nitroglycerin. **Endocrine Function —** HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors interfere with cholesterol synthesis and lower circulating cholesterol levels and, as such, might theoretically blunt adrenal or gonadal steroid hormone production. Results of clinical *trials with pravastatin in males and post-menopausal females were inconsistent* with regard to possible effects of the drug on basal steroid hormone levels. In a study of 21 males, the mean testosterone response to human chorionic gonadotropin was significantly reduced ($p< 0.004$) after 16 weeks of treatment with 40 mg of pravastatin. However, the percentage of patients showing a ≥ 50% rise in plasma testosterone after *human chorionic gonadotropin stimulation did not change significantly after therapy in these patients. The* effects of HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors on spermatogenesis and fertility have not been studied in adequate numbers of patients. The effects, if any, of pravastatin on the pituitary-gonadal axis in pre-menopausal females are unknown. Patients treated with pravastatin who display clinical evidence of endocrine *dysfunction should be* evaluated appropriately. Caution should also be exercised if an HMG-CoA reductase inhibitor or other agent used to lower cholesterol levels is administered to patients also receiving other drugs (e.g., ketoconazole, spironolactone, cimetidine) that may diminish the levels or activity of steroid hormones. **CNS Toxicity —** CNS vascular lesions, characterized by perivascular hemorrhage and edema and *mononuclear cell infiltration of* perivascular spaces, were seen in dogs treated with pravastatin at a dose of 25 mg/kg/day, a dose that produced a plasma drug level about 50 times higher than the mean drug level in humans taking 40 mg/day. Similar CNS vascular lesions have been observed with several other drugs in this class. A chemically similar drug in this class produced optic nerve degeneration (Wallerian degeneration of retinogeniculate fibers) in clinically normal dogs in a dose-dependent fashion starting at 60 mg/kg/day, a dose that produced mean plasma drug levels about 30 times higher than the mean drug level in humans taking the highest recommended dose (as measured by total enzyme inhibitory activity). This same drug also produced vestibulocochlear Wallerian-like degeneration and retinal ganglion cell chromatolysis in dogs treated for 14 weeks at 180 mg/kg/day, a dose which resulted in a mean plasma drug level similar to that seen with the 60 mg/kg/day dose. **Carcinogenesis, Mutagenesis, Impairment of Fertility —** In a 2-year study in rats fed pravastatin at doses of 10, 30, or 100 mg/kg body weight, there was an increased incidence of hepatocellular carcinomas in males at the highest dose ($p < 0.01$). Although rats were given up to 125 times the human dose (HD) on a mg/kg body weight basis, serum drug levels were only 6 to 10 times higher than those measured in humans given 40 mg pravastatin as measured by AUC. The oral administration of 10, 30, or 100 mg/kg (producing plasma drug levels approximately 0.5 to 5.0 times the human drug levels at 40 mg) of pravastatin to mice for 22 months resulted in a statistically significant increase in the incidence of malignant lymphomas in treated females when all treatment groups were pooled and compared to controls ($p < 0.05$). The incidence was not dose-related and male mice were not affected. A chemically similar drug in this class was administered to mice for 72 weeks at 25, 100, and 400 mg/kg body weight, which resulted in mean serum drug levels approximately 3, 15, and 33 times higher than the mean human serum drug concentration (as total inhibitory activity) after a 40 mg oral dose. Liver carcinomas were significantly increased in high-dose females and mid- and high-dose males, with a maximum incidence of 90 percent in males. The incidence of adenomas of the liver was significantly increased in mid- and high-dose females. Drug treatment also significantly increased the incidence of lung adenomas in mid- and high-dose males and females. Adenomas of the eye Harderian gland (a gland of the eye of rodents) were significantly higher in high-dose mice than in controls. No evidence of mutagenicity was observed *in vitro*, with or without rat-liver metabolic activation, in the following studies: microbial mutagen tests, using mutant strains of *Salmonella typhimurium* or *Escherichia coli*; a forward mutation assay in L5178Y TK +/- mouse lymphoma cells; a chromosomal aberration test in hamster cells; and a gene conversion assay using *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*. In addition, there was no evidence of mutagenicity in either a dominant lethal test in mice or a micronucleus test in mice. In a study in rats, with daily doses up to 500 mg/kg, pravastatin did not produce any adverse effects on fertility or general reproductive performance. However, in a study with another HMG-CoA reductase inhibitor, there was decreased fertility in male rats treated for 34 weeks at 25 mg/kg body weight, although this effect was not observed in a subsequent fertility study when this same dose was administered for 11 weeks (the entire cycle of spermatogenesis, including epididymal maturation). In rats treated with this same reductase inhibitor at 180 mg/kg/day, seminiferous tubule degeneration (necrosis and loss of spermatogenic epithelium) was observed. Although not seen with pravastatin, two similar drugs in this class caused drug-related testicular atrophy, decreased spermatogenesis, spermatocytic degeneration, and giant cell formation in dogs. The clinical significance of these findings is unclear. **Pregnancy: Pregnancy Category X. —** See **CONTRAINDICATIONS**. Safety in pregnant women has not been established. Pravastatin was not teratogenic in rats at doses up to 1000 mg/kg daily or in rabbits at doses of up to 50 mg/kg daily. These doses resulted *in 20x (rabbit) or 240x (rat) the human exposure based on surface area* ($mg/meter^2$). However, *in studies with another HMG-CoA reductase inhibitor, skeletal malformations were observed in rats and mice. There has* been one report of severe congenital bony deformity, tracheo-esophageal fistula, and anal atresia (Vater association) in a baby born to a woman who took another HMG-CoA reductase inhibitor with dextroamphetamine *sulfate during the first trimester of pregnancy.* PRAVACHOL (pravastatin sodium) should be administered to women of child-bearing potential only when such patients are highly unlikely to conceive and have been informed of the potential hazards. If the woman becomes pregnant while taking PRAVACHOL (pravastatin sodium), it should be discontinued and the patient advised again as to the potential hazards to the fetus. **Nursing Mothers —** *A small amount of pravastatin is excreted in human breast milk.* Because of the potential for serious adverse reactions in nursing infants, women taking PRAVACHOL should not nurse (see **CONTRAINDICATIONS**). **Pediatric Use —** Safety and effectiveness in individuals less than 18 years old have not been established. Hence, treatment in patients less than 18 years old is not recommended at this time. **ADVERSE REACTIONS:** *Pravastatin is generally well tolerated; adverse reactions have usually been* mild and transient. In 4-month long placebo-controlled trials, 1.7% of pravastatin-treated patients and 1.2% of placebo-treated patients were discontinued from treatment because of adverse experiences attributed to study drug therapy; this difference was not statistically significant. In long-term studies, the most common *reasons for discontinuation were asymptomatic serum transaminase increases and mild, non-specific* gastrointestinal complaints. During clinical trials the overall incidence of adverse events in the elderly was not different from the incidence observed in younger patients. **Adverse Clinical Events —** All adverse clinical events (regardless of attribution) reported in more than 2% of pravastatin-treated patients in the *placebo-controlled trials are identified in the table below; also shown are the percentages of patients in* whom these medical events were believed to be related or possibly related to the drug:

	All Events		**Events Attributed to Study Drug**	
Body System/Event	**Pravastatin (N = 900) %**	**Placebo (N = 411) %**	**Pravastatin (N = 900) %**	**Placebo (N = 411) %**
Cardiovascular				
Cardiac Chest Pain	4.0	3.4	0.1	0.0
Dermatologic Rash	4.0*	1.1	1.3	0.9
Gastrointestinal				
Nausea/Vomiting	7.3	7.1	2.9	3.4
Diarrhea	6.2	5.6	2.0	1.9
Abdominal Pain	5.4	6.9	2.0	3.9
Constipation	4.0	7.1	2.4	5.1
Flatulence	3.3	3.6	2.7	3.4
Heartburn	2.9	1.9	2.0	0.7
General				
Fatigue	3.8	3.4	1.9	1.0
Chest Pain	3.7	1.9	0.3	0.2
Influenza	2.4*	0.7	0.0	0.0
Musculoskeletal				
Localized Pain	10.0	9.0	1.4	1.5
Myalgia	2.7	1.0	0.6	0.0
Nervous System				
Headache	6.2	3.9	1.7*	0.2
Dizziness	3.3	3.2	1.0	0.5
Renal/Genitourinary				
Urinary Abnormality	2.4	2.9	0.7	1.2
Respiratory				
Common Cold	7.0	6.3	0.0	0.0
Rhinitis	4.0	4.1	0.1	0.0
Cough	2.6	1.7	0.1	0.0

*Statistically significantly different from placebo.

In the Pravastatin Primary Prevention Study (West of Scotland Coronary Prevention Study) (see **CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY: Clinical Studies**) involving 6595 patients treated with PRAVACHOL (pravastatin sodium) ($N = 3302$) or placebo ($n = 3293$) the adverse event profile in the pravastatin group was comparable to that of the placebo group over the median 4.8 years of the study. The following effects have been reported with drugs in this class; not all the effects listed below have necessarily been associated with pravastatin therapy: *Skeletal:* myopathy, rhabdomyolysis, arthralgia. *Neurological:* dysfunction of certain cranial nerves (including alteration of taste, impairment of extra-ocular movement, facial paresis), tremor, vertigo, memory loss, paresthesia, peripheral neuropathy, peripheral nerve palsy, anxiety, insomnia, depression. *Hypersensitivity Reactions:* An apparent hypersensitivity syndrome has been reported rarely which has included one or more of the following features: anaphylaxis, angioedema, lupus erythematous-like syndrome, polymyalgia rheumatica, dermatomyositis, vasculitis, purpura, thrombocytopenia, leukopenia, hemolytic anemia, positive ANA, ESR increase, eosinophilia, arthritis, arthralgia, urticaria, asthenia, photosensitivity, fever, chills, flushing, malaise, dyspnea, toxic epidermal necrolysis, erythema multiforme, including Stevens-Johnson syndrome. *Gastrointestinal:* pancreatitis, hepatitis, including chronic active hepatitis, cholestatic jaundice, fatty change in liver, and, rarely, cirrhosis, fulminant hepatic necrosis, and hepatoma; anorexia, vomiting. *Skin:* alopecia, pruritus. A variety of skin changes (e.g., nodules, discoloration, dryness of skin/mucous membranes, changes to hair/nails) have been reported. *Reproductive:* gynecomastia, loss of libido, erectile dysfunction. *Eye:* progression of cataracts (lens opacities), ophthalmoplegia. *Laboratory Abnormalities*: elevated transaminases, alkaline phosphatase, and bilirubin; thyroid function abnormalities. **Laboratory Test Abnormalities —** Increases in serum transaminase (ALT, AST) values and CPK have been observed (see **WARNINGS**). Transient, *asymptomatic eosinophilia has been reported. Eosinophil counts usually returned to* normal despite continued therapy. Anemia, thrombocytopenia, and leukopenia have been reported with HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors. **Concomitant Therapy —** Pravastatin has been administered concurrently with cholestyramine, colestipol, nicotinic acid, probucol and gemfibrozil. Preliminary data suggest that the addition *of either probucol or gemfibrozil to therapy with lovastatin or pravastatin is* ***not*** *associated with greater* reduction in LDL-cholesterol than that achieved with lovastatin or pravastatin alone. No adverse reactions unique to the combination or in addition to those previously reported for each drug alone have been reported. Myopathy and rhabdomyolysis (with or without acute renal failure) have been reported when another HMG-*CoA reductase inhibitor was used in combination with immunosuppressive drugs, gemfibrozil, erythromycin*, or lipid-lowering doses of nicotinic acid. Concomitant therapy with HMG-CoA reductase inhibitors and these agents is generally not recommended. (See **WARNINGS: Skeletal Muscle** and **PRECAUTIONS: Drug Interactions.**) **OVERDOSAGE:** To date, there are two reported cases of overdosage with pravastatin, both of *which were asymptomatic and not associated with clinical laboratory abnormalities.* If an overdose occurs, it should be treated symptomatically and supportive measures should be instituted as required.

CAUTION: Federal (USA) law prohibits dispensing without prescription.

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hero makes a living. Le Pen does it by inheriting estates and generous bequests from his supporters, and he has become immensely rich in the process, depositing tens of millions of dollars in Swiss banks. "I would never have been able to earn this," he told me, as we sat in the grand mansion that was bequeathed to him in Saint-Cloud's Parc de Montretout, a private enclave at the edge of a bluff over the Seine. "To earn something like this now, it would take a French public servant a hundred years," he said. "Yes, a hundred years, without taxes." And he explained how modest people used to have hope of social mobility, and a better life for their children, but now "they acquire diplomas, and with these diplomas they have the salaries of housekeepers." He began sketching vignettes of factories closing, jobs vanishing, forced retirement at fifty-five, a man tossed out as old and used with thirty years of idle existence to go. "People are anguished," he said. "It's a country that returns progressively to barbarism."

At that, Le Pen smiled once again. The smile was not nice. It looked as if an invisible bit had been tugged back through his mouth. The smile always made me want to ask another question quickly, to get him back into that oratorical trance, where he made the world as he saw it come up so vividly before me.

I asked if there had been a time in the past when France was the France he now hoped to recover. Was there a golden age? "No," he said, adding, "The golden age is a notion of the left. It's a constructivist, Rousseau-istic notion. It's the Enlightenment." He went on, "I don't believe in earthly paradise. My paradise is in another world." Happiness, he told me, "is a personal conception. What it is is that there are conditions of unhappiness"—objective conditions: poverty, insecurity, sickness, war, the absence of liberty. "Without having the pretension of creating a happy world, we try to create the conditions of a less unhappy world."

Sometimes, after a smile, he'd start in on a new topic without waiting for a question. His default theme was how unfairly he was treated by the press, which called him outrageous names—racist, for instance—quite gratuitously. "In our society the dictatorship of thought rules, the dictatorship of the single idea," he said. "He who does not believe in these prescribed beliefs and dogmas is condemned, thrown into the eternal fire. We do not discuss with the National Front, because the National Front is the Devil. We do not argue with the Devil—we hit him." Try to defend yourself, and, "it's Fascism, it's Nazism, it's the S.S. that return," Le Pen went on. "And who is behind this? The Communists, those who push the hardest, all the Trotskyists, the Maoists, all of them congratulate each other." At another point, he said, "They are scared we'll take their place," and that thought made him laugh.

For immigration, Le Pen said, only French politicians could be blamed. It wasn't the immigrants' fault. "A foreigner who knows that, in coming to France, he will earn twenty times more without working here than if he worked at home, naturally, he comes," Le Pen told me. "And if, as a bonus, we insure the education of his children, the care of his grandparents, it's El Dorado." But later he seemed to feel differently, and he said, "These countries wanted to be independent, no? They are independent. So what are they doing here?"

At one point, Le Pen said, "If it's national and patriotic ideology that is the basis of Nazism, then Netanyahu is a super-Hitler." At another point, he said, "The gas chambers have nothing to do with anti-Semitism. It has nothing to do. When I say that the gas chambers are a detail of history of the Second World War, it's obvious. It's an obviousness. If you take a book on the Second World War of a thousand pages, you will have four pages on deportation, and on these four pages you have six lines on the gas chambers." He said, "There is this tactic that consists of what Leo Strauss called the 'reductio ad Hitlerum': We'll connect everything up, forever, to the Nazis, the Jews. All the problems turn around this. It's a dialectic that I don't accept." He said, "I'm interested in the future. I'm not interested in what happened at least fifty years ago."

In the future, Le Pen said, he envisaged a "Europe of fatherlands." He explained that he had found there to be, "among all the national movements, a common body of doctrine, which includes the love of the fatherland, of the past, of the earth, traditional values, and which makes us have correspondents, or people close to us, all over the world." In January, Le Pen had visited Serbia as a guest of Vojislav Seselj, the leader of the Serbian Radical Party and the former leader of the brutal White Eagles militia. Le Pen carried the message that all patriots share the same values. Some of the Serbs he met with didn't like that; he was chided for

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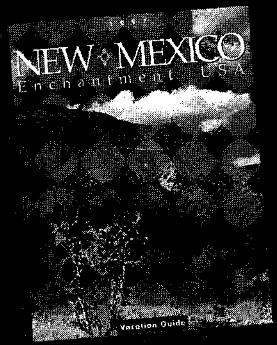

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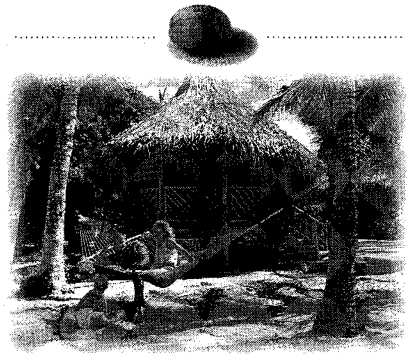

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VILLE ET VILLAGE

THE BOUNTY I

New creatures ease from earth, nostrils nibbling air,
squirrels abound and repeat themselves like questions,
worms keep inquiring till leaves repeat who they are,
but here we have merely a steadiness without seasons,
and no history, which is boredom interrupted by war.
Civilization is impatience, a frenzy of termites
round the anthills of Babel, signalling antennae
and messages; but here the hermit crab cowers when it meets
a shadow and stops even that of the hermit.
A dark fear of my lengthened shadow, to that I admit,
for this crab to write "Europe" is to see that crouching child
by a dirty canal in Rimbaud, chimneys and butterflies, old bridges
and the dark smudges of resignation around the coal eyes
of children who all look like Kafka. Treblinka and Auschwitz
passing downriver with the smoke of industrial barges
and the prose of a page from which I brush off the ashes,
the tumuli of the crab holes, the sand hourglass of ages
carried over this bay like the dust of the Harmattan
of our blown tribes dispersing over the islands,
and the moon rising in its search like Diogenes' lantern
over the headland's sphinx, for balance and justice.

—DEREK WALCOTT

sharing the values of Croat nationalists as well. Still, Le Pen expressed his support for Seselj, and invited him to visit France. Seselj, who is being investigated by the International War Crimes Tribunal, was denied a visa by the French government.

Le Pen did not think so well of Jörg Haider, who leads the extreme right Freedomites in Austria, because Haider, he said, makes too many compromises with centrists. But he spoke of having friends in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, the Baltic states, and Hungary, and among "the zealous right" wings of the Republican Party in America and the Conservative Party in England. Pat Buchanan, he said, "is not far from us," though "he could come closer." Le Pen also recalled being very nicely received by dictators like Mobutu Sese Seko, in Zaire, and El Hadj Omar Bongo, in Gabon. And Le Pen is also famous for making a trip to Baghdad in 1991, to shake Saddam Hussein's hand and express solidarity with Saddam in opposing the United Nations embargo.

Le Pen called Washington's Iraq policy "one of the greatest criminal scandals." He squeezed his eyes almost shut, and his hands drew together in front of his chest, clasping and twisting in a slow, trembling, strangling motion, as he described how the embargo had claimed the lives of "hundreds of children per day." He said, "I think that there is nothing more unclean than that. Because, at the very least, Mao Zedong, Stalin, Hitler—they were totalitarian dictators who *admitted* what they did, and their crimes. Whereas the United States and its allies assassinate people in peace, with their hands on their hearts, and in the name of human rights. I find that scandalous." Le Pen started to smile. "And they call me a racist! I defend the Arabs against the whites."

As I left Saint-Cloud, I remembered that Bruno Mégret had said to me, "If we compare Le Pen to Hitler, it makes Hitler sympathetic, because for many French people Jean-Marie Le Pen is sympathetic."

Hitler, of course, *is* an extreme standard of comparison, as Mégret's invocation of him to exculpate Le Pen makes clear. There's a huge margin for exceeding ugliness before one makes it to Hitler. But his is the memory against which new mischief-makers are measured, especially in Europe, and in France today one can't get very far in a conversation about Le Pen without entertaining or deliberately dismissing the question Is this the real thing again?

When I spoke with John Berger, he described the Front's politics as "Fascism," and said, "That's what it is, and there should be no doubt about it. People say it's not exactly like the old Fascism—so Fascism, too, changes with the times."

A few nights later, in Toulon, I met with two Presbyterian church leaders, and they described their discomfort with the city's National Front government. "We still don't think in France we'll see this again," Pastor Roger Bertrand said, and his next sentence was "It's exactly the same tactics the Nazis used in Germany to topple the Weimar Republic."

Bertrand's colleague, Dr. Francis Beauchamp, agreed. "You don't see the brown shirts," he said. "But . . . "

The famous National Front formula "Three million unemployed, that's three million immigrants too many!" has been used in the past. In 1931, two years before Hitler came to power, his National Socialist Party produced a poster that had a monstrous caricature of a Jew ballooning over a throng of ordinary-looking German office workers, and bore the legend "Five hundred thousand unemployed, four hundred thousand Jews, the solution is simple."

But what can you do? Most French live their lives as usual. They may see the Front growing and say that it certainly looks familiar, yet in the face of *la crise* a surge in the protest vote seems natural. Of course, a refusal to take it seriously is part of the insidious formula that allowed Fascism to win power in the past. So how do you know? Even Alain Finkielkraut, who thought the "anti-Fascists" had gone off the rails, was unsure. "The hysteria is understandable, because Le Pen is almost a Nazi," he said. "It can't be underestimated."

Claude Lanzmann was also discomfited by the question. "I have a lot of trouble persuading myself within that there's a Fascist danger in France of the Hitlerian sort," he told me, adding, "I think that French democracy is strong enough, and there are banks of opposition that are important in France, and I don't believe either that history is repeating itself in any way. But at the same time it's true that as time passes they're winning. I may be wrong not to consider that it's a central danger."

Bruno Mégret, of course, saw things differently. The National Front, he told me, "is the only moderate movement in our country." It was the situation in France that was extremist, he said. He invoked the revolutionary Terror, and Stalinism, and spoke of the "totalitarian danger in France called 'politically correct.' " He said, "True freedom of expression consists in saying what does not please the powers that be," and it followed that when Le Pen tweaks the establishment with his pronouncements "he defends freedom of expression, not only for the National Front but for all Frenchmen." To hear Mégret tell it, Le Pen is a kind of French Lenny Bruce, and the National Front, which has called for the repeal of France's hate-speech laws, is the country's civil-liberties union.

"Do you think this is democracy? This? Come on. Come on, seriously," Le Pen barked at me, during a harangue about his exclusion from the channels of public debate which ought to be available to a party that enjoys the Front's level of popular support. He sounded angry and deeply insulted, but he also appeared to recognize that being outlawed has its advantages, and to take great satisfaction in pointing out the deep wound he and his Party have opened up in the soul of the republic.

"At the beginning, I didn't believe that Le Pen would last, and I hope not to go too far in the other direction," the sociologist Dominique Schnapper told me. Schnapper, who is the daughter of the eminent postwar political commentator Raymond Aron, described the Front as "a rottenness" in public life, but said, "I don't think that they can legally come to power." Then she remembered Germany. "It's not good," she said. "No, it's humiliating. It's very humiliating to be French. I'm humiliated."

ON Easter weekend, in Strasbourg, an empty pedestal stood outside the cathedral in the city center. By order of the socialist mayor, the resident statue of Joan of Arc had been taken into protective custody. The National Front was in town for its annual conference, preparing its campaign strategy for the parliamentary elections next year, and Strasbourg's City Hall said that Joan had been taken away lest some of the forty thousand anti-Front demonstrators who filled the streets, marching and chanting, try to desecrate her image.

In France these days, politics is often described as operating in the treacherous realm of *la symbolique*, which is also, of course, the realm of memory. The evacuation of Joan of Arc from her pedestal before the coming of the National Front led one to wonder: Could the city really not have protected the Maid where she stood? ◆

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THE POLITICS OF FOOD

IS THERE A CRISIS IN FRENCH COOKING?

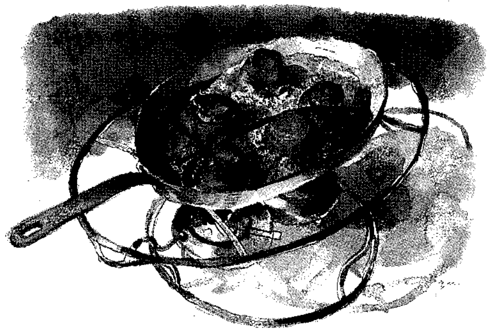
What happened?

BY ADAM GOPNIK

NINE O'CLOCK on a Friday morning, and David Angelot, the *commis* at the restaurant Arpège, on the Rue de Varenne, has begun to braise tomatoes for dessert. The *tomate confite farcie aux douze saveurs* is one of the few dishes in the Michelin red guide whose place on the menu has to be clarified with a parenthesis (*dessert*), indicating that though it sounds like a veggie, it eats like a sweet. It is a specialty of the kitchen of the great chef Alain Passard, which a lot of people think is the best and most poetic in Paris, and probably all France; it requires a hair-raising amount of work by the *commis*, the kitchen cabin boy; and many people who care about French cooking believe that it is a kind of hopeful portent—a sign that the creative superiority of French cooking may yet be extended indefinitely. Normally, a braised tomato becomes tomato sauce. ("The limitations of this insight," one of Passard's admirers has noted gravely, "describe the limitations of Italian cuisine.") To make a tomato get sweeter without falling apart not only is technically demanding but demonstrates, with a stubborn, sublime logic, an extremely abstract botanical point. Tomatoes are not vegetables; they are fruit.

For David, who may not see M. Passard all day long, they are work. David, who is eighteen, and who studied cooking at a government school just outside Lyons, cuts the tomatoes open (about fifty of them, from Morocco, in the winter), scoops them out, and makes a *farce*, a stuffing of finely chopped orange and lemon zest, sugar, ginger, mint, pistachios, star anise, cloves; then he makes a big pot of vanilla-scented caramel and braises the stuffed tomatoes in it, beating the caramel around the tomatoes vigorously for forty-five minutes without actually touching them. The tomato is a fruit, and can be treated like one, but it helps to beat a lot of caramel into its body, to underline the point.

While he works, he thinks about his girlfriend (who is also a cook, and with whom he lives in an apartment in north Paris), his future, and his desire to someday visit Japan. He works in a tiny basement room in the small, two-story space of the kitchen, and he shares that room with another, more experienced assistant, Guilhem, who spends his mornings making bread. (All the bread at Arpège is made by hand.) Guilhem, while he works, thinks of going back to Washington—he calls it "D.C."—where he has been before, where there is a constant demand for good French food, and where he has an offer to work in a French bakery. If David's job at Arpège embodies one of the principles of high French cooking—the gift of making things far more original than anyone can imagine—Guilhem's embodies the opposite but complementary principle: the necessity of making things much better than anybody needs. This morning, he will make three kinds of bread: a sourdough raisin-and-nut loaf; trays of beautiful long white rolls; and a rough, round peasant bread. All the bread will be sliced and placed in baskets to be presented upstairs in the dining room, and then mostly pushed around absent-mindedly on the plates of people who are looking at their menus and deciding what they really want to eat. This knowledge makes Guilhem a little bitter. He thinks about D.C.

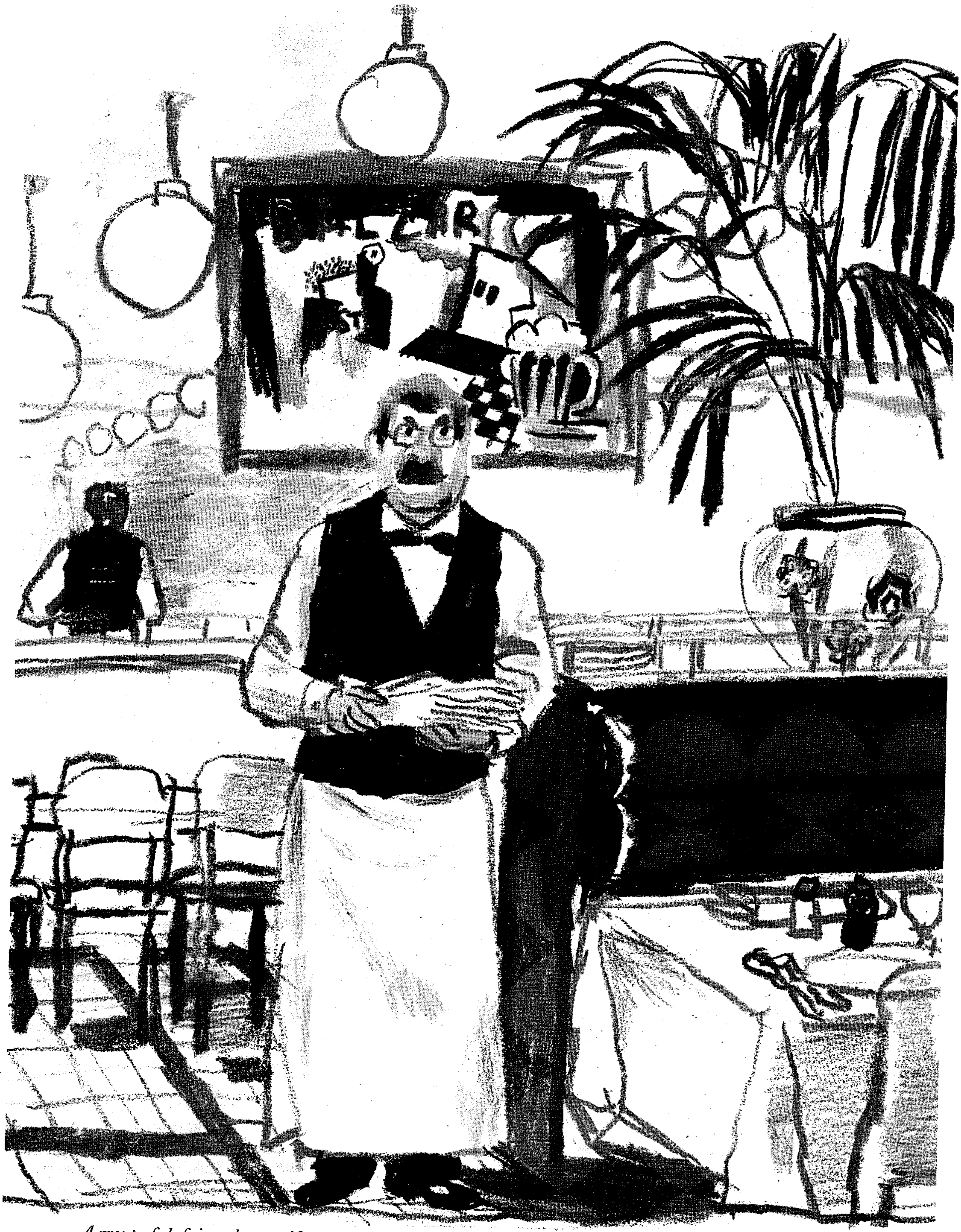


Can tomate confite rescue a culinary culture under siege?

In the main kitchen, a short flight up, Pascal Barbot, the sous-chef, is keeping things under control. The atmosphere there, with eleven serious short men in white uniforms going about intricate tasks in a cramped space, does not so much resemble the bridge of a nuclear submarine in an action movie as it does the bridge of a nuclear submarine in an action movie after it has been taken over by the Euro-terrorists led by Alan Rickman: that kind of intensity, scared purposefulness, quickness, and heavy, whispered French. The kitchen is white and silver, with a few well-scrubbed copper pots hanging high up—not like the lacquered copper you see in rusticated, beam-heavy restaurant interiors but dull and scrubbed and penny-colored. The richest colors in the kitchen are those of French produce, which is always several glazes darker than American: the birds (chickens, pigeons, quail) are yellow and veined with deep violet, instead of the American white and rose. The assistant chefs start at nine o'clock, and will remain at their *stages* until one o'clock the next morning. When the service begins, around twelve-thirty, they will experience an almost unendurable din, which, after a few days of work, they learn to break down into three or four distinct sounds: the *thwonk* of metal in water hitting the sides of a sink as a pot is washed by one of the Malinese *plongeurs;* the higher, harsh *clank* of one clean saucepan being placed on another; the surprisingly tinny, machine-gun *rat-a-tat* of a wire whisk in a copper pot; and the crashing, the-tent-just-fell-down-on-your-head sound of hot soiled pans being thrown down onto tile to be washed again. (In a good kitchen, the pans are constantly being recycled by the *plongeurs.*)

The kitchen crew includes three Americans. They have worked mostly at California and New York restaurants of the kind that one of them describes as "grill-and-garnish joints." They are all converts

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GERARD NICOLAS



A group of chefs issued a manifesto protesting the spread of exotic food combinations and alien spices in France.

to Passardism. There is never anything entirely new in cooking, but Passard's technique is not like anybody else's. Instead of browning something over high heat in a saucepan and then roasting it in an oven, in the old French manner, or grilling it quickly over charcoal, in the new American one, Passard cooks his birds and joints *sur la plaque:* right on the stove, over extremely low heat in big braising pans, sometimes slow-cooking a baby *gigot* or a milk-fed pig in a pot for four or five hours on a bed of sweet onions and butter. "He's just *sweating* those babies," one of the Americans marvels under his breath, looking at the joints on the stoves. "Makes them cook themselves in their own fat. It's like he does everything but make them pluck their own feathers and jump into the pan. Fucking genius."

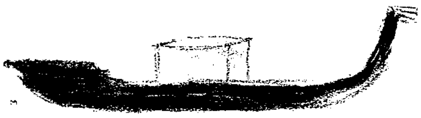
Downstairs, another of the Americans is slicing butter and teasing Guilhem about his D.C. plans. "Look at this butter," he says to himself. "That's not fucking Land O'Lakes." He turns to Guilhem. "Hey, forget about D.C.," he says. "It's cold. There are no women. Where you want to go is California. That's the promised land. Man, that's a place where you can cook *and* have a life."

Guilhem looks genuinely startled, and turns to speak. "You can?" he says, softly at first, and then louder, calling out to the back of the American cook as he races up the stairs with the butter pats for the dining room. "You *can*?"

MOST people who love Paris love it because the first time they came they ate something better than they had ever eaten before, and kept coming back to eat it again. My first night in Paris, twenty-five years ago, I ate dinner with my enormous family in a little corner brasserie somewhere down on the unfashionable fringes of the sixteenth arrondissement. We were on the cut-rate, American-academic version of the Grand Tour, and we had been in London for the previous two days, where we had eaten *steamed* hamburgers and fish-and-chips in which the batter seemed to be snubbing the fish inside it as if they had never been properly introduced. On that first night in Paris, we arrived late on the train, checked into a cheap hotel, and went to eat (party of eight—no, party of nine, one of my sisters having brought along a boyfriend), without much hope, at the restaurant at the corner, called something like Le Bar-B-Que. The prix-fixe menu was fifteen francs, about three dollars then. I ordered a salad Niçoise, trout baked in foil, and a cassis sorbet. It was so much better than anything I had ever eaten that I nearly wept. (My mother, I am compelled at gunpoint to add, made food like that all the time, too, but a mother's cooking is a current of life, not an episode of taste.) My feelings at Le Bar-B-Que were a bit like those of Stendhal, I think it was, the first time he went to a brothel: I knew that it could be done, but I didn't know there was a place on any corner where you could walk in, pay three dollars, and get it.

That first meal in Paris was for a long time one of the few completely reliable pleasures for an American in Europe. "It was the green beans," a hardened New Yorker recalled not long ago, remembering his first meal in Paris, back in the late forties. "The green beans were like nothing I had ever known," he went on. He sat suddenly bolt upright, his eyes alight with memory.

Now, though, for the first time in several hundred years, a lot of people who live in France are worried about French cooking, and so are a lot of people who don't. The French themselves are, or claim to be, worried mostly about the high end—the end that is crowded into the Passard kitchen—and the low end. The word *crise* in connection with cooking appeared in *Le Monde* about a year ago, with the news that a restaurant near Lyons, which had earned three Michelin stars, was about to close. Meanwhile, a number of worrying polls have suggested that the old pyramid of French food, in which the base of plain dishes shared by the population pointed upward to the higher reaches of the Grande Cuisine, is collapsing. Thirty-six per cent of the French people polled in one survey thought that you make mayonnaise with whole eggs (you use only yolks), seventeen per cent thought that you put a *travers de porc* in a pot-au-feu (you use beef), and seven per cent believed that Lucas Carton, the Paris restaurant that for a century has been one of the holiest of holies of haute cuisine, is a name for badly cooked meat. More ominously, fully seventy-one per cent of Frenchmen named the banal steak-frites as their favorite *plat;* only people past sixty preferred a *blanquette de veau*, or a *gigot d'agneau*, or even a pot-au-feu, all real French cooking. (The French solution to this has been, inevitably, to create a National Council of Culinary Arts, connected to the Ministry of Culture.)



To an outsider, the real *crise* lies in the middle. That Paris first-night experience seems harder to come by. It is the unforced superiority of the cooking in the ordinary corner bistro—the *prix-fixe ordinaire*—that seems to be passing. This is partly a tribute to the international power of French cooking, and to the great catching-up that has been going on in the rest of the world for the past quarter-century. The new visitor, trying out the trout baked in foil on his first night in Paris, will probably be comparing it with the trout baked in foil back home at, oh, Le Lac de Feu, in Cleveland—or even back home at Chez Alfie, in Leeds, or Matilda Qui Danse, in Adelaide—and the trout back home may just be better: raised wild or caught on the line. Even the cassis sorbet may not be quite as good as the kind he makes at home with his Sorbet-o-matic.

The fear—first unspoken, then whispered, then cautiously enunciated, and now loudly insisted on by certain competitors—is that the muse of cooking has migrated across the ocean to a spot in Berkeley, with occasional trips to New York and, of all places, Great Britain. People in London will even tell you, flatly, that the cooking there now is the best in the world, and they will publish this thought as though it were a statement of fact, and as though the steamed hamburger and the stiff fish had been made long ago in another country. Two of the best chefs in the London cooking renaissance said to a reporter not long ago that London, along with Sydney and San Francisco, is one of the capitals of good food, and that the food in Paris—"heavy, lazy, lacking in imagination"—is now among the worst in the world.

All this makes a Francophile eating in Paris feel a little like a turn-of-the-century clergyman who has just read Robert Ingersoll: you try to keep the faith, but Doubts keep creeping in. Even the most ardent Paris lover, who once blessed himself at every dinner for having escaped Schrafft's, may now find himself—as he gazes down one more unvarying menu of *boudin noir* and *saumon unilatéral* and *entrecôte bordelaise* and *poulet rôti*, eats one more bland and buttery dish—feeling a slight pang for that Cuban-Vietnamese-California grill on Amsterdam Avenue, or wondering whether he might, just possibly, enjoy the New Sardinian Cooking, as featured that week on the cover of *New York*.

I would still rather eat in Paris than anywhere else in the world. The best places in Paris, like the Brasserie Balzar, on the Rue des Écoles, don't just feed you well; they make you happy in a way that no other city's restaurants can. (The Balzar is the place that plays Gallant to the more famous Brasserie Lipp's Goofus.) Even in a mediocre Paris restaurant, you are part of the richest commonplace civilization that has ever been created, and that extends back visibly to the previous century. In Paris, restaurants can actually go into a kind of hibernation for years, and awaken in a new generation: Lapérouse, the famous swanky nineteenth-century spot, has, after a long stretch of being overlooked, just come back to life, and is a good place to eat again. Reading Olivier Todd's biography of Camus, you discover that the places where Camus went to dinner in the forties (Aux Charpentiers, Le Petit St. Benoît, Aux Assassins) are places where you can go to dinner tonight. Some of Liebling's joints are still in business, too: the Beaux-Arts, the Pierre à la Place Gaillon, the Closerie des Lilas.

"Personally, I'm a doer."

These continuities suggest that a strong allegiance to the past acts as a drag on the present. But, after several months of painstaking, tie-staining research, I think that the real problem lies in the French genius for laying the intellectual foundation for a revolution that takes place somewhere else. With movies (Méliès and the Lumière brothers invented the form, and then couldn't build the industry), with airplanes, and now even with cooking, France has again and again made the first breakthrough and then got stalled. All the elements of the new cooking, as it exists today in America and in London—the openness to new techniques, the suspicion of the overelaborate, the love of surprising juxtapositions—were invented in Paris long before they emigrated to London and New York and Berkeley. But in France they never coalesced into something entirely new. The Enlightenment took place here, and the Revolution worked out better somewhere else.

• •

THE early seventies, when I was first in France, were, I realize now, a kind of Indian summer of French haute cuisine, the last exhalation of a tradition that had been in place for several hundred years. The atmosphere of French cooking was everywhere in Paris then: thick smells and posted purple mimeographed menus; the sounds of cutlery on tables and the jowly look of professional eaters emerging blinking into the light at four o'clock.

The standard, practical account of the superiority of French cooking was that it had been established in the sixteenth century, when Catherine de' Medici brought Italian cooks, then the best in the world, to Paris. It was not until after the French Revolution, though, when the breakup of the great aristocratic houses sent chefs out onto the street looking for someone to feed, that the style of French cooking went public. The most famous and influential figure of this period—the first great chef in European history—was Antonin Carême, who worked, by turns, for Talleyrand, the future George IV, Czar Alexander I, and the Baroness de Rothschild. He invented "presentation." His cooking looked a lot like architecture, with the dishes fitted into vast, beautiful neoclassical structures.

The unique superiority of French cooking for the next hundred years depended on the invention of the cooking associated with the name Auguste Escoffier. Escoffier's formula for food was, in essence, the same as Jasper Johns's formula for Dada art: take something; do something to it; then do something else to it. It was cooking that rested, above all, on the idea of the master sauce: a lump of protein was cooked in a pan, and what was left behind in the pan was "deglazed" with wine or stock, ornamented with butter or cream, and then poured back over the lump of protein. Escoffier was largely the creature of courtiers and aristocratic patrons; the great hoteliers of Europe, and particularly César Ritz, sealed in place the master-sauce approach that remains the unchallenged basis of haute cuisine.

It was also an article of faith, dating, perhaps, to Alexandre Dumas *père's* famous Grand Dictionnaire de Cuisine, that the cooking of Carême and Escoffier had evolved from a set of provincial folk techniques. At the heart of French food lay the pot-au-feu, the bouillon pot that every peasant wife was supposed to keep on her hearth, and into which, according to legend, she threw whatever she had, to stew for the day's meal. French classic cooking was French provincial cooking gone to town.

I HEARD another, more weirdly philosophical account of this history, from a professor named Eugenio Donato, who was the most passionately intellectual eater I have ever known. Armenian-Italian, reared in Egypt and educated in France, he spoke five languages, each with a nearly opaque Akim Tamiroff accent. ("It could have been worse," he said to me once, expertly removing one mussel with the shell of another as we ate *moules marinière* somewhere on the Place de la Sorbonne. "I had a friend whose parents were ardent Esperantists. He spoke five languages, each with an impenetrable Esperanto accent.") Eugenio was a literary critic whom we would now call a post-structuralist, though he called what he did "philosophical criticism."

Most of the time, he wandered from one American university to another—the Johnny Appleseed or Typhoid Mary of deconstruction, depending on your point of view. He had a deeply tragic personal life, though, and I think that his happiest hours were spent in Paris, eating and thinking and talking. His favorite subject was French food, and his favorite theory was that "French cooking" was foreign to France, not something that had percolated up from the old pot-au-feu but something that had been invented by fanatics at the top, as a series of powerful "metaphors"—ideas about France and Frenchness—which had then moved downward to organize the menus and, retrospectively, colonize the past. "The idea of the French chef precedes French cooking" was how he put it. Cooking for him was a form of writing—Carême and Escoffier had earned their reputations by publishing cookbooks—with literature's ability to make something up and then pretend it had been there all along.

The invention of the French restaurant, Eugenio believed, depended largely on what every assistant professor would now call an "essentialized" idea of France. One proof of this was that, if the best French restaurants tended to be in Paris, the most "typical" ones tended to be in New York. Yet the more abstract and self-enclosed haute cuisine became, the more inclined its lovers were to pretend that it was a folk art, risen from the French earth unbidden. For Eugenio, the key date in this masquerade was 1855, when the wines of Médoc were classified into the famous five growths in which they remain today. "The form of metropolitan rationalization being extended to the provincial earth, *in the guise of the reflection of an order locked in the earth itself*," he announced once, bringing his fist down on the tablecloth. He was a big man, who looked uncannily like John Madden, the football coach.

On that occasion, we were eating lunch in one of the heavy, dark, smoky Lyons places that were popular in Paris then. (There is always one provincial region singled out for favor in Paris at any moment—"privileged" would have been Eugenio's word. Then it was Burgundy; now it is the southwest. This fact was grist for his thesis that the countryside was made in the city.) The restaurant was, I think, someplace over in the seventh—it may have been Pantagruel, or La Bourgogne. At lunch, in those days, Eugenio would usually begin with twelve escargots in Chablis, then go on to something like a *filet aux moelles*—a filet with bone marrow and Madeira sauce—and end, whenever he could, with a mille-feuille.

The food in those places wasn't so much "rich" as deep, dense. Each *plat* arrived looking mellow and varnished, like an old violin. Each mouthful registered like a fat organ chord in a tall church, hitting you hard and then echoing around the room: there's the bass note (the beef), there's the middle note (the marrow), and there's the treble (the Madeira in the sauce).

It couldn't last. "We have landed in the moment when the metaphors begin to devour themselves, the moment of rhetorical self-annihilation," Eugenio once said cheerfully. This meant that the food had become so rich as to be practically inedible. A recipe from the restaurant Lucas Carton I found among a collection of menus of the time which Eugenio bequeathed to me suggests the problem. The recipe is for a *timbale des homards*. You take three lobsters, season them with salt and pepper and a little curry, sauté them in a light *mirepoix*—a mixture of chopped onions and carrots—and then simmer them with cognac, port, double cream, and fish stock for twenty minutes. Then you take out the lobsters and, keeping them warm, reduce the cooking liquid and add two egg yolks and a hundred

SHOWCASE BY MAX VADUKUL

IF NOT NOW, WHEN?

SHORTLY after "Barton Fink" won the Golden Palm at the 1991 Cannes Film Festival, the great Italian director Francesco Rosi ("Three Brothers," "Eboli") told Barton Fink himself, the New York actor John Turturro, that he would be perfect for a "grotesque and ironic" movie he had in mind. Six festivals later, Rosi's "The Truce" will compete at Cannes, in May. An adaptation of Primo Levi's 1963 memoir (also known as "The Reawakening"), the film, which stars Turturro as Levi, chronicles the young Jewish chemist's trek from Auschwitz back home to Turin after the Second World War.

The author—who apparently took his own life in 1987—might have been surprised at the casting, given the actor's background. Turturro says that his father emigrated from Italy as a boy (a "budding young Fascist"), became a patriotic American, joined the Navy, survived a sinking on D Day, and later "made me watch documentaries with material about the concentration camps." Over the years it took to launch the film, Turturro steeped himself in Levi's books. Playing this "rare" man was "unlike anything I've ever done—not histrionic, just the opposite," he says. "I realized that the more inward you kept the drama and the more humbly you approached the material, the closer you got to understanding it, in some infinitesimal way. Francesco was willing to make a movie about little moments—not about the destruction of men but about what men are left with after they've been destroyed."

Yet is a major American distributor willing to sell it? Although the film has been nominated for ten David di Donatello awards in Italy, Miramax (which owns the rights) hasn't come up with plans for an American release. Martin Scorsese, who urged Turturro to take the part, says, "It's a wonderful film, it should be seen, it deserves to be seen." The picture's final fate awaits its screening at Cannes. "I hope," Rosi says, referring to Miramax, "that our relationship will be easy and happy." —MICHAEL SRAGOW

John Turturro, photographed in Prospect Park, Brooklyn.

"It says, 'Congratulations! You've been chosen as a finalist to be King of England.' "

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and fifty grams of sweet butter. Metaphors like that can kill you.

Something had to give, and it did. The "nouvelle cuisine" that replaced the old style has by now been reduced to a set of clichés, and become a licensed subject of satire: the tiny portion on the big oval plate; the raspberry-vinegar infusion; the kiwi. This makes it difficult to remember how fundamental a revolution it worked in the way people cooked. At the same moment in the early seventies, a handful of new chefs—Michel Guérard, Paul Bocuse, Alain Senderens—began to question the do-something-to-it-then-do-something-else-to-it basis of the classic cooking. They emphasized, instead, fresh ingredients, simple treatment, an openness to Oriental techniques and spices, and a general reformist air of lightness and airiness.

The new chefs had little places all around Paris, in the outlying arrondissements, where, before, no one would have travelled for a first-rate meal: Michel Guérard was at Le Pot-au-Feu, way out in Asnières; Alain Dutournier, a little later, settled his first restaurant, Au Trou Gascon, in the extremely unfashionable twelfth. In the sad, sedate seventh arrondissement, Alain Senderens opened Archestrate, first in a little space on the Rue de l'Exposition, in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower, and then on the Rue de Varenne.

From the beginning, the new cooking divided into two styles, into what Eugenio identified as "two rhetorics," a rhetoric of *terroirs* and a rhetoric of *épices*—soil and spice. The rhetoric of the *terroirs* emphasized the allegiance of new cooking to French soil; the rhetoric of the *épices* emphasized its openness to the world beyond the hexagon. The soil boys wanted to return French cooking to its roots in the regions; the spice boys wanted to take it forward to the new regions of *outre-mer*. Even as the new cooking tried to look outward, it had to reassure its audience (and itself) that it was really looking inward.

ON the surface, the beautiful orderly pattern continues. Alain Senderens is now in Michel Comby's place at Lucas Carton and has replaced the *timbale des homards* cooking with his own style. Senderens's Rue de Varenne Archestrate is now occupied by Alain Passard, the Senderens of his generation, while the original Archestrate is occupied by a talented young chef and his wife, just starting out, who have named the restaurant after their little girl: La Maison de Cosima.

But, twenty-five years later, the great leap forward seems to have stalled. A large part of the *crise* is economic: a hundred-dollar lunch is a splurge, a four-hundred-dollar lunch a moral dubiety. Worse, because of the expense, the cooking at the top places in Paris is no longer a higher extension of a commonplace civilization. It is just three-star cooking, a thing unto itself, like grand opera in the age of the microphone. Like grand opera, it is something that will soon need a subsidy to survive—the kitchen at Arpège depends on regular infusions of range-struck Americans to fill the space left by the French kids who no longer want to work eighteen-hour days for very little money while they train.

And it is like grand opera in this, also: you can get too much of it, easily. It is, truth be told, often a challenge to eat—a happy challenge, and sometimes a welcome one, but a challenge nonetheless. It is just too rich, and there is just too much. The new cooking in France has become a version of the old.

At Lucas Carton, you begin with, say, a plate of vegetables so young they seem dewy, beautifully done, but so bathed in butter and transformed that they are no longer particularly vegetal; and then you move on to the new lobster dish that has taken the place of the old one. Where the old lobsters were done in a cowshedful of cream, the new lobsters are done, *épicé* style, with Madagascar vanilla bean. This is delicious, with the natural sugar of the lobster revealing the vanilla as a spice—although, for an American, the custard-colored sauce, dotted with specks of black vanilla, disconcertingly calls to mind melted lunchroom ice cream. For dessert, you might have a roasted pineapple, which is done on the same principles on which Passard's tomatoes are braised: it ends up encrusted in caramel. This is delicious, too, though intensely sweet. Lunch at Lucas these days can fairly be called Napoleonic or Empire: the references to the revolutionary principles are there, but finally it's in thrall to the same old aristocratic values.

Lucas is hardly representative, but

even at the lesser, less ambitious places the cooking seems stuck in a rut: a chunk of boned protein, a reduced sauce; maybe a fruit complement, to establish its "inventive" bona fides; and a purée. The style has become formulaic: a disk of meat, a disk of complement, a sauce on top. The new cooking seems to have produced less a new freedom than a revived orthodoxy—a new essentialized form of French cooking, which seems less pleasing, and certainly a lot less "modern," than the cooking that evolved at the same time from the French new cooking in other countries. The hold of the master sauté pan, and the master sauce, and the thing-in-the-middle-of-the-plate, is still intact.

THINKING it over, I suspect that Eugenio put his finger on the problem with the new cooking in France when it first appeared. "A revolution can sweep clean," he said. "But a reformation points forward and backward at the same time." The new cooking was, as Eugenio said, a reformation, not a revolution: it worked within the same system of Michelin stars and fifteen-man kitchens and wealthy clients that the old cooking did: it didn't make a new audience; it tried to appropriate the old one.

In America—and in England, too, where the only thing you wanted to do with the national culinary tradition was lose it—the division between soil and spice wasn't a problem. You could first create the recipes and then put the ingredients in the earth yourself. The American cooks who have followed in Alice Waters's pathmaking footsteps at Chez Panisse, in Berkeley—the generation whom a lot of people think of as the children of M. F. K. Fisher—created a freewheeling, eclectic cosmopolitan cuisine: a risotto preceding a stir-fry leading to a *sabayon*. Then they went out and persuaded the local farmers to grow the things they needed.

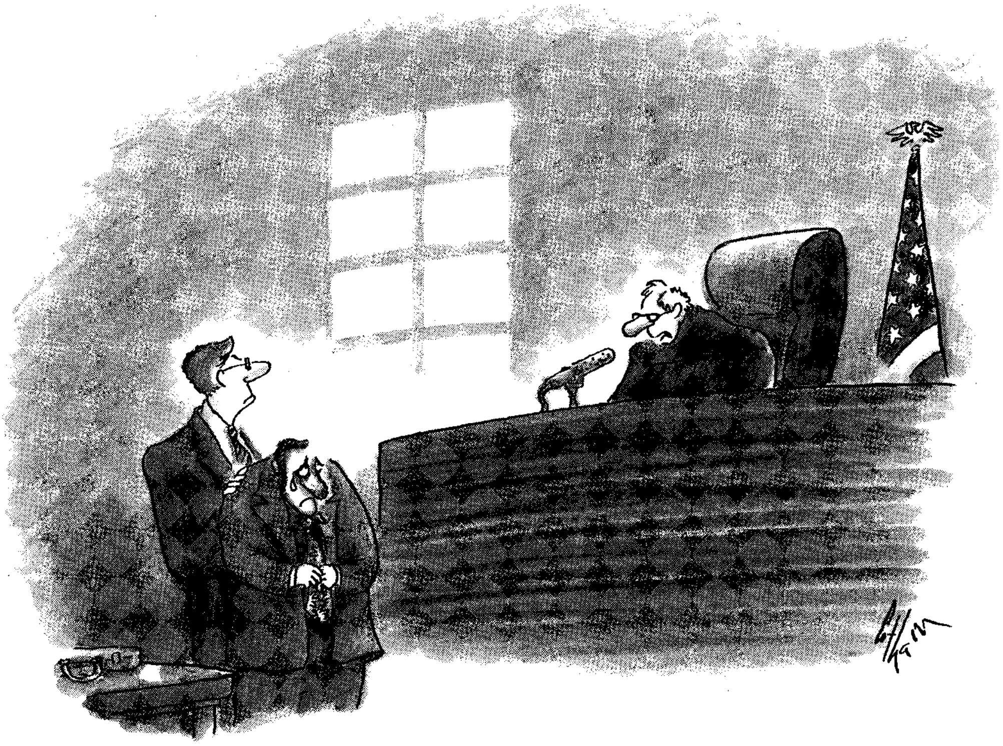
In France, the soil boys won easily. Some of what they stood for is positive and even inspiring: the *terroirs* movement has a green, organic, earth-conscious element that is very good news. The *marché biologique* every Sunday morning on the Boulevard Raspail has become one of the weekly Parisian wonders, full of ugly, honest fruit and rough, tasty country meat. And it is rare for any restaurant in Paris to succeed now without presenting itself as a "regional" spot—a southwest, or Provençal, or Savoyard place. (Even at the exquisite Grand Véfour, at the Palais-Royal, the most beautiful restaurant in the world and a cathedral of the cosmopolitan tradition, it is thought necessary to parade around a plate of the cheeses of the chef's native Savoy.)

Yet the insistence on national, or local, tradition—on truth to *terroirs*—can give even to the best new Paris restaurants a predictability that the good new places in London and New York don't share. The French, who invented the tradition of taking things over and then insisting that they were yours all along, are now shy about doing it. The cooking at a French restaurant must now, for the first time, be French. This tendency came to a head last spring, when a group of important French chefs actually issued a manifesto protesting the spread of exotic food combinations and alien spices in French cooking, and calling for a return to the *terroirs*.

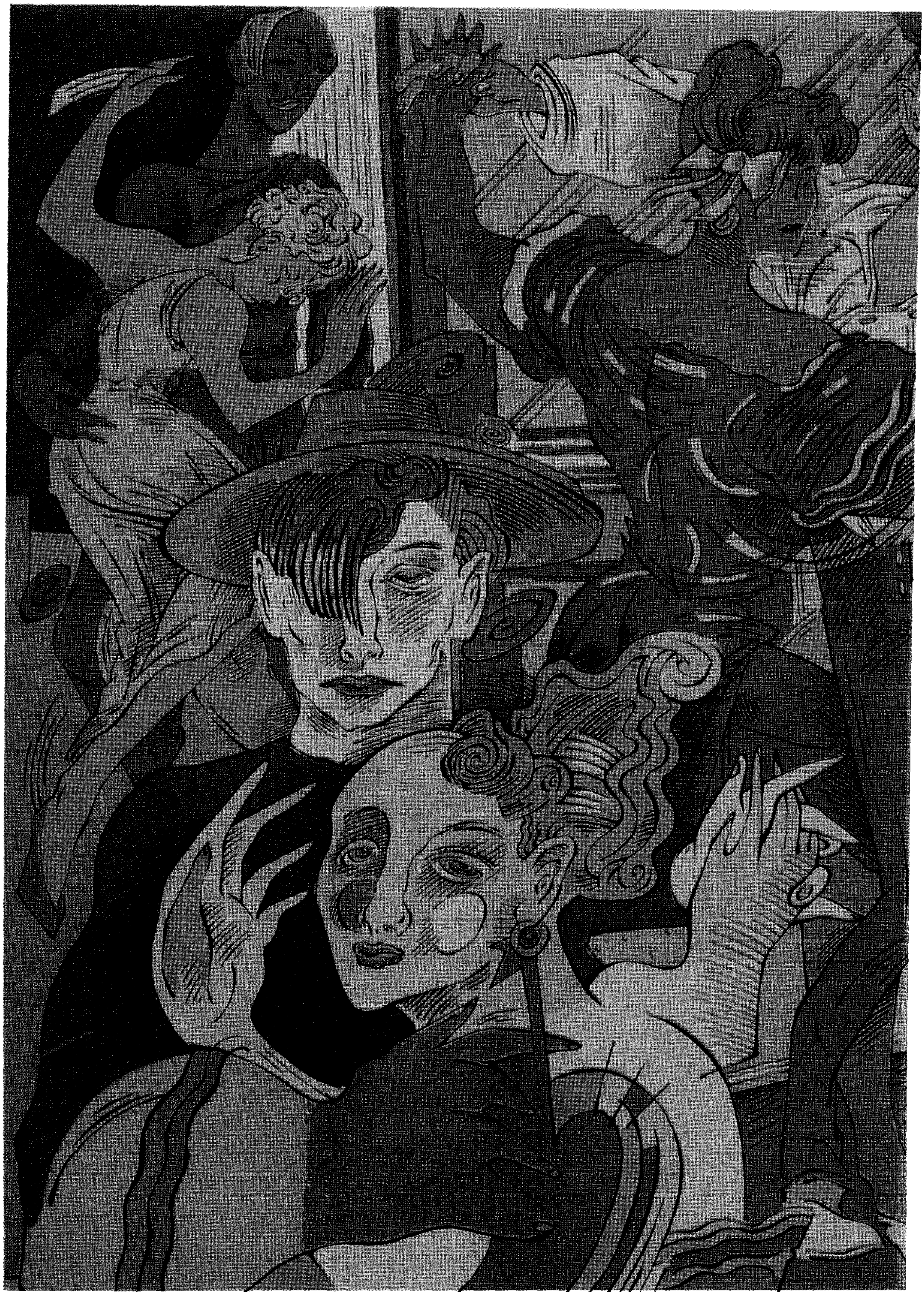
Peter Hoffman, the owner and chef of the influential Savoy, in New York, is one of those American chefs who went to France in the early eighties, were dazzled, and now find that the light has dimmed. He likes to tell about his most recent dinner at the three-star restaurant L'Ambroisie, on the Place des Vosges. "We went to L'Ambroisie and had a classic French dish: hare with blood sauce. It was fabulous, everything you want rabbit with blood to be. But then I got talked into ordering one of the chef's specialties, a mille-feuille of langoustines with curry, and it was infuriating. It was a French dish with powder. It was such an insular approach, as though nobody understood that curry isn't a powder that you apply cosmetically. Nobody had read Madhur Jaffrey, or really understood that curry isn't just a spice you shake but a whole technique of cooking you have to understand."

As the writer Catharine Reynolds points out, the new cooking in America and England alike is really Mediterranean cooking, inspired by Italy, Tunisia, and Greece. It suits the fat-allergic modern palate better than the old butter-and-cream cooking of the north. France, which has a big window south, ought to be open to its influence, yet remains resistant. The real national dish of the French right now—the cheap, available food—is couscous. But North African cooking remains segregated in couscous parlors, and has not been brought into the main current. A fossilized metropolitan tradition should have been replaced by a modernized metropolitan tradition, yet what took its place was sentimental nationalism.

It was the invasion of American fast



"Oh, very well—make that life with *the possibility of parole."*



food, as much as anything, that made the French turn back to their own tradition and, for the first time, see it as something in need of self-conscious protection. Looking at America, the French don't see the children of M. F. K. Fisher; they just see the flood tides of McDonald's, which, understandably, strike fear into their hearts. The bistro became an endangered species. To make still one more *blanquette de veau* suddenly became not a habit of commonplace civilization but a form of self-defense.

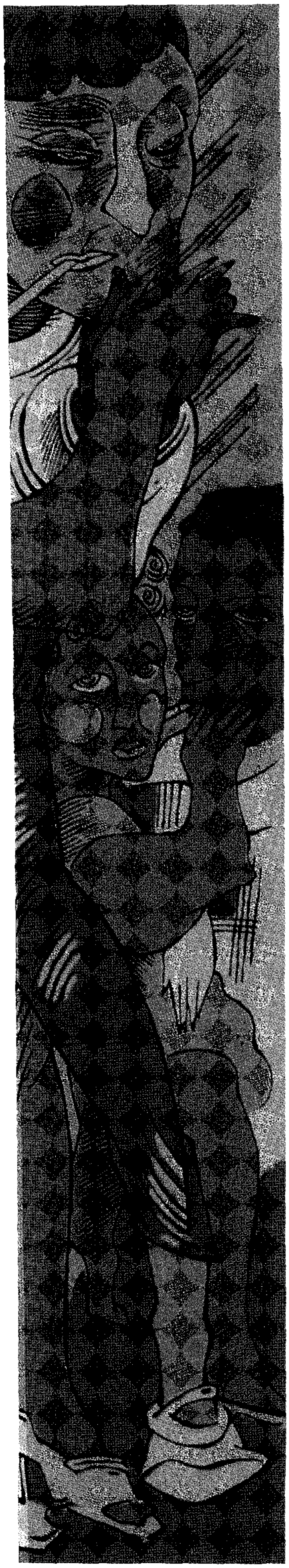
WAVERLEY ROOT once divided all Gaul into three fats—lard, olive oil, and butter—and said that they determined the shape of French cooking. That you might be able to cook without putting any fat in the pan at all was an unthinkable notion. The charcoal grill, the brick oven, and all the other nonfat ways of cooking now seem normal everywhere except in France. People who look at cooking more practically than philosophically think that that technical lag is the heart of the problem.

"It's deglaze or die" is how Alexandra Guarnaschelli, an American cook in Paris, puts it. The master-sauce approach remains the basis of French cooking, whereas elsewhere it has been overthrown by the grill. The pan and the pot have always been the basic utensils of French cooking—just what was there—in the same way that the grill was the primary element of American-vernacular backyard cooking. For Americans, grilled food wasn't new but familiar, and good cooking is made up of familiar things done right. As the excellent American chefs Chris Schlesinger and John Willoughby have pointed out, grilling forced an entirely new approach to saucemaking: with no residue to deglaze, the cook had to think in terms of savory complements rather than subtle echoes. Grilling demanded chutney, fruit mustards, spice mixes. Although the French tradition included these things, they weren't part of the vernacular.

Alex has seen some of the predicament at first hand. She is twenty-seven; she arrived in France five years ago and, after training in Burgundy, became a *commis* at Guy Savoy's two-star place in the seventeenth arrondissement. Within a couple of years, she had worked her way up to fish chef, and, a little while later, Savoy appointed her second-in-command at his bistro, La Butte Chaillot. (This is like a young Frenchman arriving in New York, all enthusiastic about baseball, and ending up five years later as the third baseman of the Yankees.)

The other day, over coffee on the Avenue Kléber, Alex, who is from New York (she went to Barnard, Mom's an editor at Scribner, Dad's a professor), said, "I decided I wanted to chop onions, so I tried the C.I.A."—the Culinary Institute of America, the M.I.T. of American cooking—"but it was like eighteen thousand a year, *tout compris*, so I decided to go to Burgundy and chop. I started learning the French way, which is half beautiful beyond belief and half 'Please shoot me.' It's by the book. Really, there's a book, and you learn it. There's a system for everything, a way to do it. You can't cut the fish that way, because *ça n'est pas bon*. You can't bone a chicken that way, because *that's* not good. 'We do it the way it's always been done in France.' When I first started at Savoy, there was one old stager who, every time I did something, would just frown and shake his head and say, 'It won't do, it won't do.' Finally, I did *exactly* what he did, and he said, 'Good, now, always do it exactly the same way.' So I did. You never get a real attempt to innovate, or to use new flavors. You can change an adjective, but the sentence stays the same.

"Whenever we make a classic sauce, everybody gathers around and *argues* about it. Once, we got into a two-hour argument about whether you use chervil as well as tarragon in a true béarnaise. There



MIXOLOGIST

Ceesepe, the Madrileño artist with the single name, paints in series, creating upward of three hundred works in a season, and his sequential style makes for a seductive restlessness. Like another Spaniard—his contemporary Mariscal, the Catalan with whom he founded the underground magazine El Vibora in the seventies—Ceesepe moves easily between the worlds of art and commerce. Asked to pin down some influences, he shrugs and rattles off a few: Modigliani, Art Spiegelman, Maurice Chevalier—"sort of a blender of influences." In "Amour Apache," at left, his polish is hard to miss: loose, surehanded draftsmanship; Cubist shifts in perspective; and a signature smolder.

are certain things these days that I will not do. I will not do mayonnaise or béarnaise. Uh-uh. I don't have time for the postgame analysis.

"Of course, there's that tomato at Passard's place," she went on. "But have you seen the way the poor kid has to work to make it?"

Alex's existence helps to explain why the new cooking went deeper in America than it could in France: in America the cooking revolution was above all a middle-class revolution, even an upper-middle-class revolution. A lot of the people who made the cooking revolution in America were doing it as a second career. At the very least, they were doing it after a liberal-arts degree; David Angelot started slicing carrots at fifteen. The most mocked of all modern American restaurant manners—the waiter who introduces himself by name—is, on reflection, a sign of something very positive. "I'm Henry, and I'll be your waiter tonight" means, really, "You and I belong to the same social class. Tomorrow night, I could be sitting there, and you could be standing here."

The French system of education, unrenovated for a long time, locks people in place. Kids emerge with an impressive respect for learning and erudition, and intimidated by it, too. For an American, getting a Ph.D. is a preliminary, before you go someplace else and find your real work, like opening a restaurant. Nobody thinks of changing *métiers* in France, because it's just too hard. In America, not only the consumers of the new cooking but, more important, the producers and dealers were college-educated. I once met a pair of American academics who had gone off to live with a flock of goats and make goat cheese. They had named the goats Emily, Virginia, Jessamyn, Willa, and Ursula. It was terrific goat cheese, too.

BEYOND these reasons—the missing grill, the resurgent nationalism, the educational trap—there may be an even deeper reason for the lull in French cooking. A new book, "L'Amateur de Cuisine," by an unknown author, Jean-Philippe Derenne, which was published last year, offers an anatomy of French cooking—an effort to organize the materials, forms, and manners of the subject in a systematic way. "This cookbook is a book," the author writes on the first page, and then attempts to create a whole taxonomy of cooking based not on folk tradition or cosmopolitan recipes but on an analysis of plants and animals and the chemistry of what happens when you apply different kinds of heat and cold to them before you eat them. He begins his market section with the minerals (a crisp page and a half), and then passes to the plants (more than a hundred pages) and the animals, divided into those of the earth and the sky and those of fresh and salt water. (Even "Serpents, Sauriens, Lézards, etc." get their moment in the sun.) He gives a precise biological description of every imaginable thing there is to eat, then presents an exact analysis of every imaginable method of cooking it and shows how all the glories of cuisine rise out of the limitless intersections of these two forces. It is a vast, eleven-hundred-page volume, comprehensive and radiant; it resembles less a cookbook than a medieval almanac, offering a timeless, secure, benevolent universe of food. Its subject isn't cooking. It's *plenty*.

Derenne is a modest and gentle scholar, not a cook or a critic, or even a gourmand. He is a doctor, the head of the pulmonary department at a Paris hospital. Over lunch one afternoon at Arpège, Derenne, who is a small, good-natured man, with the open face and happy appetites of a Benedictine monk, said, "The same week that 'L'Amateur de Cuisine' came out, I published another book, called 'Acute Respiratory Failure of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease.'" That was another thousand pages. This, surely, is a record for total weight by one author published in one week.

Derenne wrote the cookbook in seclusion, in the garden of his little house near Fontainebleau, only to find himself, on its publication, a new lion of the French culinary establishment: the man who wrote the book. He gets reverential, *cher maître*-type letters from Paul Bocuse. Passard himself sees him as a friend. Dr. Derenne doesn't know quite what to make of it all.

"My editor said to me, when I gave him the manuscript, 'Why, you've written the first humanist history of food.' I said, 'No, not humanist. It's a religious book, really.' I was

DER
STURM UND DRANG
DROIDS
TANZ!
TANZ!
TANZ!
TANZ!
ACHTUNG!
ACHTUNG!
Shanahan

"Ve're techno-industrial, but rootsy."

THE BOUNTY II

I cannot remember the name of that seacoast city,
but it trembled with summer crowds, flags, and the fair
with the terraces full and very French, determinedly witty,
as perhaps all Europe sat out in the open air
that was speckled and sun-stroked like Monet that summer
with its gray wide beach, ah yes! it is near Dinard,
a town with hyphens, I believe in Normandy
or Brittany, and the tide went far out and the barred
sand was immense. I was inhabiting a postcard.
The breeze was cold, but I did a good watercolor,
and it stands there on the wall. And though it is dated,
time races across its surface but nothing changes
its motion, the tidal flats not clouded, the tiny
figures in the distance, the man walking his dog. Any
stroke and tint have eluded time. Still, it estranges.
Now, so many deaths, nothing short of a massacre
from the wild scythe blindly flailing friends, flowers, and grass,
as the seaside city of graves expands its acre
and the only art left is the preparation of grace.
So, for my *Hic jacet*, my own epitaph, "Here lies
D.W. This place is good to die in." It really was.

—DEREK WALCOTT

inspired by a history of religion by Mircea Eliade, which attempted the same kind of logical organization: rising upward from the types of religious apparition into the possibilities of organized faith. I've done for cooking what that author did for belief: shown an underlying logic without attempting to make it logical."

He went on to talk about a second volume, which he's just started: "It may be called 'free cuisine,' but really it will be about the rejected cuisine. About everything the world throws out. Shells and guts and leaves—the whole world of the rejected. This is religious, too, because religion depends on being able to find the holy in the ordinary. It's putting together things banal in themselves which nonetheless become transformed into something transcendent. You know who else has this quality? Duke Ellington—he simply used what he had."

There was something surprising about Derenne's talk, an expansive, open, embracing ardor that a hundred years ago would have seemed more American than French. It seems possible that the different fates of the new cooking in France and America are a sign of a new relation between the two places.

A century ago, Americans used to say that what brought them to Europe was its history. At home, there was "no sovereign, no court . . . no aristocracy . . . nor ivied ruins; no cathedrals," as Henry James's famous list has it. What really brought Americans to the Old World, though, was the allure of power: cultural power, political power, military power—imperial power, as it existed in Europe and only there. What fascinated Whistler and James in the Old World was not its age but the extreme self-consciousness that comes with power, the way that power could be seen to shimmer through manners—the way that what you wore or how you stood (or what you ate) spelled out your place in a complicated and potent social hierarchy.

Now that that power has passed into American—or, anyway, English-speaking—hands, the trappings of power which come from extreme self-consciousness are ours, too. Even our cooking—especially our cooking—has become involved with power. Where you stand on, say, the spread of McDonald's is a political issue, just as where you stood on the outdoor café was in France a century ago. Even the smaller issues of the palate count: most American women define their feminism, at least in part, in terms of their attitude toward the kitchen. A century ago, the modern form of that self-consciousness was invented in Paris. The limitlessly complicated relation of what you eat and where you eat it to where you stand in the social order is the subject of, for instance, the first two chapters of Maupassant's "Bel-Ami." But now food and cooking in France have begun to take at least a small half turn back toward their other role, as sources of nourishment, comfort, cohesion. The role of food as anxious social theatre, seen at its crudest in the endless worry in Los Angeles and New York about power tables—where you sit at Spago, what time you leave the Four Seasons—is diminishing in France. We are the worldly, corrupt ones at the table now, and the Europeans, in this regard at least, are the innocents. Even their philosophers eat for pleasure.

WHEN the *tomate confite*, which David Angelot had been working on since nine o'clock, came out at last, Derenne tasted it. Then he said, "You see, he demonstrates for us what we knew from the first, that the tomato is a fruit. Would you call that arrogance or modesty?"

Not long after that, I finally did what I had dreaded doing, though it would have been the practical thing to do all along, which was to go back to that first restaurant and see what it was like now. I walked back and found both the hotel and the restaurant, though both had changed their names—the hotel belonged now to the Best Western chain—and, while in memory I had kept them on the same street, they were in fact a street apart. But the exterior of the restaurant was unmistakable; I found it by getting the Eiffel Tower in exactly the same area of my eye as it had occupied when I was fourteen. It was not far from—I am not making this up—the Avenue Marcel-Proust. The restaurant is now called the Tournesol, and the less expensive prix fixe is a hundred and fourteen francs, or about twenty dollars. I ate à la carte. I had a little foie gras, sole meunière, and a cassis sorbet.

The food was even better than I had remembered. This proves either that (a) Proust was wrong, and you can always recapture the pleasures of your youth if you just go back to the places where you had them, or (b) there is more good cooking left in Paris than I knew, or (c) I went to the wrong place. Anyway, there's hope. ♦

PERSONAL HISTORY

THE ROMEO FILE

When the English author learned—as did so many Germans—that those he had thought were his friends were really secret-police informers, he decided to ask them why.

BY TIMOTHY GARTON ASH

"GUTEN *Tag*," a bustling Frau Schulz says. "You have a very interesting file." And there it is—a buff-colored binder, some two inches thick, rubber-stamped on the front cover: "OPK-Akte, MfS, XV 2889/81." Underneath is written, in a neat, clerical hand, "Romeo."

Romeo?

"Yes, that was your code name," Frau Schulz says, and giggles.

I sit down at a small plastic-wood table in Frau Schulz's cramped room at the Federal Authority for the Records of the State Security Service of the former German Democratic Republic. As I open the binder, I find myself thinking of an odd moment in my East German life.

One night in 1980, when I was living as a student in East Berlin, I returned with a girlfriend, whom I shall call Andrea, to my room in a crumbling Wilhelmine tenement house in the borough of Prenzlauer Berg. This was a room with a view—a view into it. Large French windows gave directly onto a balcony, and, were it not for the net curtains, people living across the street could look straight in.

As we embraced on the narrow bed, Andrea suddenly pulled away, finished undressing, went over to the window, and threw open the net curtains. She turned on the glaring main light and then came back to me. Had this been, say, Oxford, I might have been a little surprised by the bright light and the open curtains. But this was Berlin, so I thought no more about it.

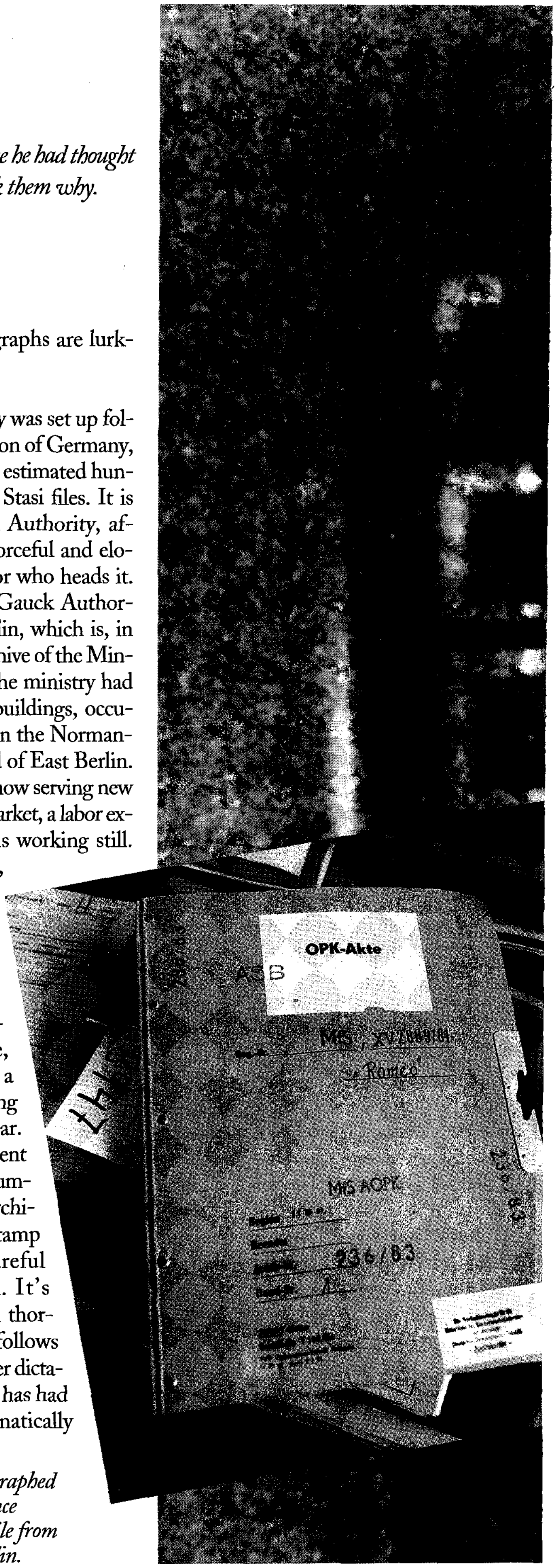
Until, that is, I learned about the file. Then I remembered this episode and started wondering whether Andrea had been working for the State Security Service, the dreaded Stasi, and whether she had opened the curtains so we could be photographed from the other side of the street.

INSET: MAURICE WEISS/OSTKREUZ

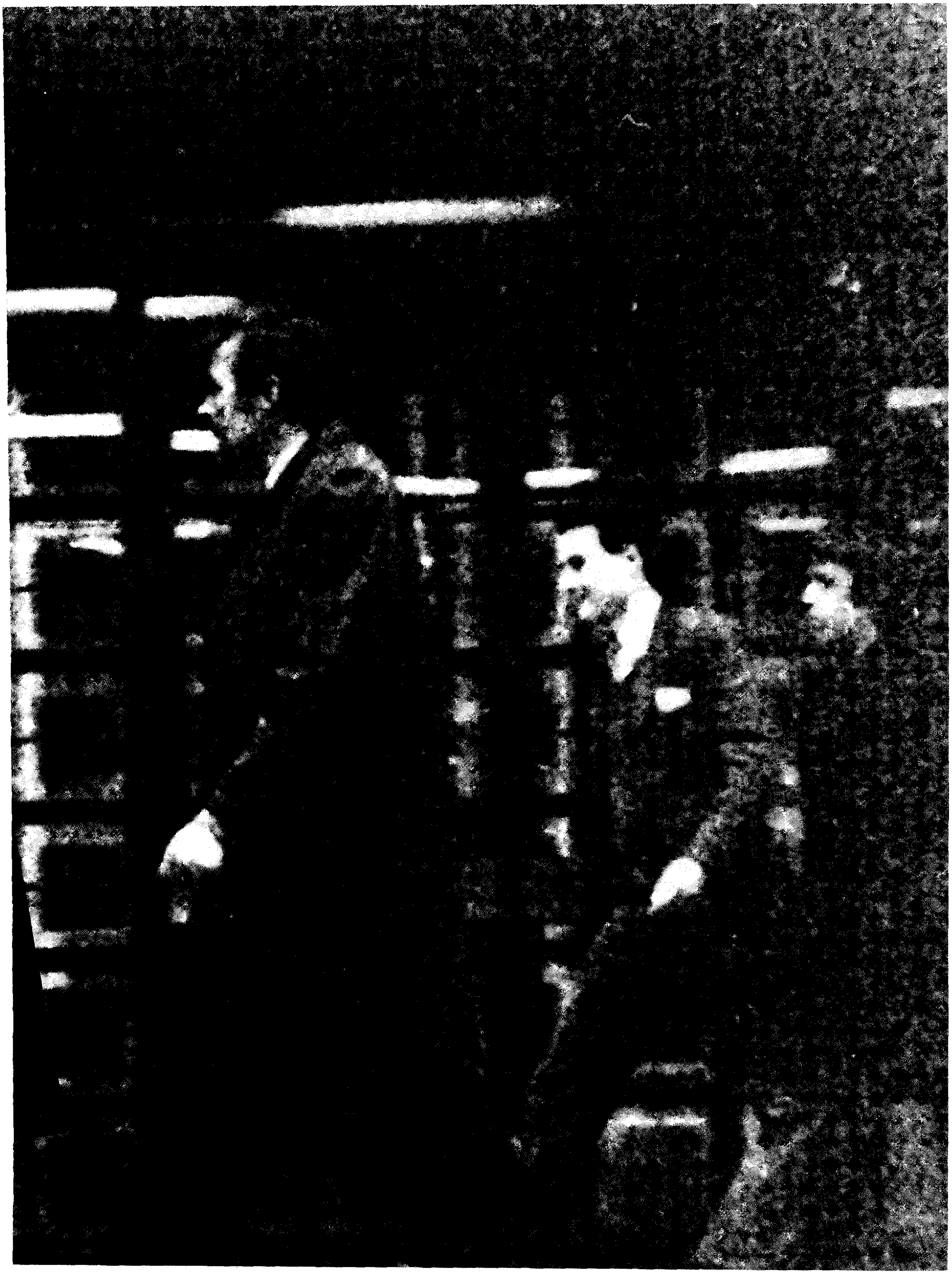
Perhaps those photographs are lurking in this binder.

THE Federal Authority was set up following the unification of Germany, in 1990, to administer the estimated hundred and eleven miles of Stasi files. It is usually called the Gauck Authority, after Joachim Gauck, the forceful and eloquent East German pastor who heads it. My file comes from the Gauck Authority's main archive, in Berlin, which is, in fact, the former central archive of the Ministry for State Security. The ministry had a vast complex of office buildings, occupying a block and a half on the Normannenstrasse, in the east end of East Berlin. Most of the buildings are now serving new purposes: offices, a supermarket, a labor exchange. But the archive is working still.

In the catalogue room, middle-aged women in bright-pink pullovers and nylon trousers patter around in plastic sandals between the huge, motorized card-index machines. It's a weird place, this Gauck Authority: a ministry of truth occupying the former ministry of fear. Every page of every document you get to see has been renumbered by the authority's archivists, with a neat rubber stamp over the Stasi's own careful handwritten pagination. It's like a parody of German thoroughness. One extreme follows the other. Probably no other dictatorship in modern history has had such an extensive and fanatically

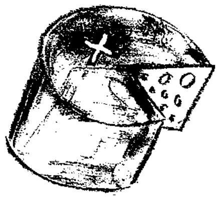


The author (center) photographed by a secret-police surveillance camera, in 1980, and his file from the central archives in Berlin.



thorough secret police as East Germany had, and certainly no democracy in modern history has done more to expose the legacy of the preceding dictatorship than the new Germany has.

The effect of reading a file can be terrible. I think of the now famous case of Vera Wollenberger, a member of the peace movement, who discovered that her husband, Knud, had been informing on her ever since they met. They would go for a walk with the children on Sunday, and on Monday Knud would be off pouring it all out to his Stasi case officer. She thought she had been married to Knud; she found she had been married to an informer code-named Donald. Vera refers to him in a memoir as Knud-Donald. They are now divorced. Had the files not been opened, they might still be man and wife.



THE “OPK” on the front cover of my file stands for *Operative Personenkontrolle*—Operational Person Control. According to the 1985 edition of the Stasi’s internal Dictionary of Political-Operational Work, the Operational Person Control existed to identify anyone who might have a “hostile-negative attitude,” or who might be vulnerable to being exploited for hostile purposes by the enemy. The central function of the Operational Person Control, the dictionary explains, is to answer the question “Who’s who?” Each file begins with an “opening report” and a “plan of action.”

My opening report dates from March, 1981. Prepared by one Lieutenant Wendt, it gives my personal details, notes that I have been studying in West Berlin since 1978, and lived from January, 1980, until June of that year—actually, it was until October—in “the capital of the G.D.R.” (i.e., East Berlin). I have also travelled to Poland frequently. Because I have repeatedly “made contact with operationally interesting persons,” there are grounds for suspecting that I have deliberately exploited my “official functions as research student and/or journalist to pursue intelligence activities.”

Lieutenant Wendt then reviews the information that counterintelligence department II/9 has pulled together for this purpose from all the other departments of the ministry. There are incredibly detailed reports on me from the Stasi’s informers, and minute-by-minute descriptions of what I was doing on a particular day—these prepared by the regular police spies. (“16.15 hours . . . greeted a female person with a handshake and kiss on the cheek. This female person received the code name ‘Beret.’ ”) There are also summaries of material from files on my German friends and on people at the British Embassy, photocopies of articles I wrote about Poland, and copies of pages from my own notebooks, photographed during a secret search of my luggage at Schönefeld airport. In all, there are three hundred and twenty-five pages. They transport me back in memory more surely than any madeleine.

I HAD set off for Germany on my twenty-third birthday—July 12, 1978. My original purpose was to write an Oxford doctoral thesis about Berlin under Hitler. Despite all the hedonistic distractions of life in West Berlin, my diary still records me spending long, weary hours working through the records of the Nazis’ so-called People’s Court at the Berlin Document Center.

The People’s Court papers were kept piled up on metal shelves, dusty and uncatalogued. I was appalled at the number of prosecutions that began with a denunciation not by paid Gestapo informers but by ordinary people: a barber denounced by a customer; a housekeeper denounced by her employers; and a husband accused by his wife. Many of these trials led to a death sentence. At the end of the day, I would step out into the sunlit streets of leafy Grunewald, sickened by this seemingly endless record of human baseness and cruelty. Often, I felt as if I had blood on my own hands. I would go for a swim, to wash the blood off. Then I would have a drink at a café and look at the old women gossiping at the next table.

I also talked to veterans and survivors. There were casual acquaintances, each with an extraordinary personal history—a motor mechanic, for example, whose parents died while he was a baby, during the desperate flight west before the advancing Red Army, so that he knew neither his birthplace nor his birthday nor his real name nor his parentage. I visited Albert Speer, Hitler’s chief architect and armaments minister, at his gingerbread house in Heidelberg, and he chilled me with his well-polished tale of the unpolitical technocrat. Then, there were the grand old men of the German resistance to Hitler; they met every year, on the anniversary of the July 20, 1944, bomb plot, in the courtyard of the former Wehrmacht headquarters. It was there that the leader of the plot, Count Stauffenberg, had stood before a firing squad. Just before he died, Stauffenberg cried out in defiance, “*Es lebe das heilige Deutschland!*”—“Long live sacred Germany!” Or was it “*Es lebe das geheime Deutschland!*”—“Long live secret Germany!,” a reference both to the resistance conspiracy and to the semimystical ideas of his spiritual mentor, the poet Stefan George? Stauffenberg’s last words are still disputed. Amid the ghosts of secret Germany, I was searching for the answer to a personal question: What is it that makes one person a resistance fighter and another the faithful servant of a dictatorship—this man a Stauffenberg, that a Speer?

Yet in East Germany people were still actually living those endlessly difficult choices between collaboration with and resistance to a dictatorship. By moving to East Berlin, I could pursue the Stauffenberg-Speer question in, as it were, real time.

THERE were many kinds of collaborators in that Communist state, but the most notorious nowadays are the Stasi’s informers, known as *Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter*—“unofficial collaborators”—or IM for short. They were subdivided into several categories: security, special, operative, conspirative, even the informer for running other informers. In 1989, the initials IM entered the German language. S.S. is the synonym in every European language for the loud, violent, outright bestiality of Nazism. In German, “IM” has become the synonym for the routine, bureaucratic forms of infiltration, intimidation, and collaboration which characterized the German Communist dictatorship—the quieter corruption of mature totalitarianism. In the early nineteen-nineties, it was a regular occurrence for a prominent East German politician, academic, journalist, or priest to be identified through the Stasi files as an IM and to disappear from public life as a result. IM is the black spot.

The numbers are extraordinary. According to internal records, in 1988—the last “normal” year of the G.D.R.—the Ministry for State Security had some hundred and ten thousand regular informers, while an additional sixty thousand people were involved in “conspiratorial” services, such as lending their flats for secret meetings, or were listed as reliable contacts. The ministry itself had more than ninety thousand full-time employees, of whom only some five thousand were in the foreign-intelligence wing. Setting the total figure against the adult population in the same year, this means that about one out of every fifty adult East Germans had a direct connection with the secret police.

The Nazis had nothing like as many. In 1941, the full-time staff of the Gestapo, for the vastly larger territory of Greater Germany, came to fewer than fifteen thousand. We have no national statistics on the number of regular informers under the Nazis, but it seems clear that this figure was also very much smaller. The Third Reich, in its relatively short life, starting with real popular enthusiasm and ending with five and a half years of war, could rely much more on voluntary denunciations—as I found in those dusty People's Court files. In East Germany, the regime was never popular to start with, and the longer it continued the more it came to depend on this huge network of informers.

I appear to have had the attentions of five. Their evidence and operational potential are carefully weighed by Lieutenant Wendt. My most assiduous informer is code-named Michaela. She is easy to identify: when I knew her, she held a senior position in the official cultural life of Weimar, and I enjoyed her company and conversation. I am shocked by her reports. They are chock-full of information not just on me but also on the family of Eberhard Haufe, a frail, white-haired, sharp-witted scholar of German classical literature, whom I stayed with in Weimar and much admired.

Fifteen years later, and now with the purpose of writing a book about the file, I again drive down to Weimar and talk to the Haufes. They describe their own bitter experiences with the Stasi, whose local office they helped to storm in December, 1989. I hope that I will be able to confront Michaela, but the Haufes tell me that she has moved to Berlin.

Racing my hired car up the battered old Autobahn to Berlin, I check in at a hotel and reach for the phone book. There is one entry with Michaela's real name. I dial the number. "Ah, Herr Esch, you visited us in Weimar, didn't you? And I've since read your book." I explain that I am very briefly in town and have a particular reason for wanting to see her. We fix a time in the afternoon for me to visit her at her home. "You'll certainly have many questions," she says. "Really, I'm looking forward to it."

I FIND the address—a tower block of characteristic socialist-modernist design, well situated and smart by East German standards. A tall, rather loud woman, with large features and gray eyes behind metallic spectacles, greets me at the door. She's wearing trousers, high heels, and bright lipstick—a hand-me-down Marlene.

"Well," she says cheerfully, when we are settled with coffee and cakes, "what are you up to these days?"

"Do you have an inkling of why I have sought you out today?" I ask.

A pause, just slightly too long. Then, "No, not really." That "really" again.

So I tell her.

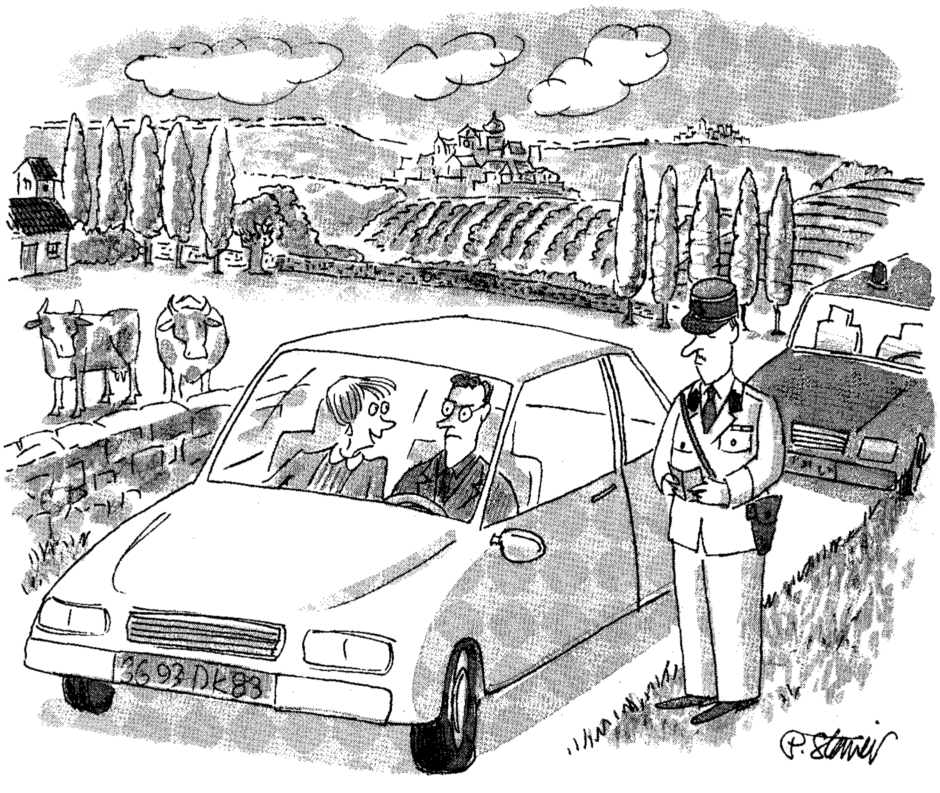
"Yes," she says immediately. "One was obliged to in my position." About once a month, they would come to see her, she explains. Her secretary would say, "Boss, you have a visitor again." They would tell the secretary they were from the local council, but would give only a first name: Heinz or Dieter or Michael. The conversation was in her professional capacity: *dienstlich, nur dienstlich*—official business, purely official business. But surely, I insist, my visit was an entirely private one. Yes, but her husband was convinced that I must be working for British intelligence, so this was at least a semiofficial matter, *halb-dienstlich*. How she clings to the sheet anchor of *dienstlich*.

She talks in a rather matter-of-fact, outwardly self-confident way about her association with the Stasi, but then asks, nervously, "What did they report?" Not "I" but "they."

I hand her photocopies of the reports, some twenty pages in all. They start with a long account of my first visit to her pretty flat in Weimar. In five pages of typewritten text, one Lieutenant Küntzel records every tiny detail of our conversation, from questions I asked Michaela about a recent exhibition on the Bauhaus to my association with an English weekly identified as "Spacktator" (i.e., the *Spectator*). He also notes my height, haircut, and build. All the information comes from her or from her husband, KP (Contact Person) Georg. Lieutenant Küntzel makes a note at the end of his report to "give instructions" to Michaela for "a possible second contact" with me.

As she reads, I ask how the interview normally proceeded. Did Dieter or Heinz have a notebook? Yes, yes, they had an open notebook and they carefully wrote everything down. And really one coöperated; one was obliged to. And one tried to tell as many harmless details as possible.

She goes back to reading the photo-



"Isn't this right out of Peter Mayle?"

copies. There's an account of how "in order to maintain the connection" she had asked me to send her the catalogue of an exhibition in West Berlin. (I thought she was interested in the art.) There's the transcript of a taped interview that Lieutenant Küntzel conducted with her husband, and there's even a postcard I sent her. Perhaps most unsettling for her is a long account of my visit to the Haufes, and her recorded assessment of my cultured and critical friends: "Both persons are marked by a bourgeois life style." After a discussion of my contact with the Haufes' son Christoph—a student at Jena University—Lieutenant Künzel suggests that he, too, should be investigated. (Christoph could have been expelled from the university as a result.) Again and again, she herself is identified as Michaela, with the dreaded initials "IM," black on white.

Suddenly, she puts the papers down and says, "I can't read anymore. I feel sick, I want to puke." She turns and walks to the door, and when she comes back she is crying. Her voice is strangled as she says, "This can't be excused." Still, she tries to explain. Her grandfather was a Prussian officer, but her grandmother was Jewish, so, according to the Nazi classification in the Nuremberg Laws, her father was a so-called *Mischling*. Yet because he was a gifted gynecologist the S.S. employed him in one of its maternity hospitals, in Thuringia. After the war, her father came back to be a senior doctor in Brandenburg, joining first the Social Democrats and then the Socialist Unity Party, which was formed from the forced merger of the Social Democrats with the Communists. She was fifteen in 1945, and for her this was a time of elation and true belief in a new beginning. She was sure they were building a better Germany. Of course, she says, the style of the new regime was awfully petit bourgeois and Philistine for someone from her background, but still. . . . Her hopes faded only slowly. The Soviets' crushing of the Prague Spring was an important moment of disillusionment. But even in the nineteen-seventies she still believed that "socialism" was the better system. Anyway, it was there; it was the only thing she had known all her adult life.

In 1975, she got this good job in Weimar. But with it came Dieter and Heinz. As she talks, emotionally, disjointedly, she reveals rather vividly the mixture of motives that made her collaborate: some residual belief in the system; the sense that it was an official duty; the hope of using the Stasi as a player in the bureaucratic game, to overcome resistance from other parts of the Party and state apparatus. Also, her husband thought I really was a spy, and, after all, there was a war on, wasn't there—a Cold War, between her system and mine?

And fear?

"Yes, of course, underneath one was shit-scared of them." So one tried to disarm any suspicion, to show how coöperative one was, by chatting away, giving all sorts of harmless detail. "And this is what comes out." As she looks at the photocopied reports of IM Michaela, she nearly breaks down again, the eyes behind the metallic spectacles filling with tears. "Really, one should write to the Haufes," she says. She struggles to regain her composure, wrestling with what she has done.

She is buffeted by conflicting thoughts and emotions. One moment, she says, "Really, it's good that you've shown me this." The next, "And now you want to write something? And you wanted to see my reaction? And now I've reacted like this and been upset, and that's good for you, isn't it?" She laughs bitterly, then asks, "Will you name names?" Later, she says, "Ah, well, perhaps I can sue you for defamation, and I'll win a lot of money. . . . No, no, sorry, that was only a joke. . . . But perhaps there is some protection.

"We repressed so much . . . Why didn't I apply to see my file? Because I didn't want to know what was in it . . . Who knows what else there is . . . I think this was the only time I reported so extensively on private matters. I thought it was *dienstlich*, but . . . Well, I hope if you do write you'll try to explain the subjective as well as the objective conditions. How it was then. But probably that's impossible. Even I can't really remember now."

The conversation dies in the twilight. What can I say at parting? "It was a pleasure to see you again"? Hardly. Or "I'm sorry to have done this to you"? What I do say is, "The copies are for you. Please write to me if you have anything you want to add. Here is my address."

And she replies, "Ah, Oxford!" She spent a lovely day there recently, she says. She goes to England every year, to visit old friends. "Have you written down your telephone number? Perhaps next time I'll ring you up!"

As we shake hands at the front door, she does not say "Sorry." She says, "How did you get here, by car?"

No, by subway.

"Oh, it's a very good connection, isn't it?" Struggling for self-respect and normality, as if nothing had happened. Nothing, really.

You must imagine conversations like this taking place every evening, in kitchens and sitting rooms all over Germany. Painful encounters, truth-telling, friendship-demolishing, life-haunting. Hundreds, thousands of such encounters, as the awful power of knowledge is slowly passed down from the Stasi to the employees of the Gauck Authority, and from the employees of the Gauck Authority to individuals like me.

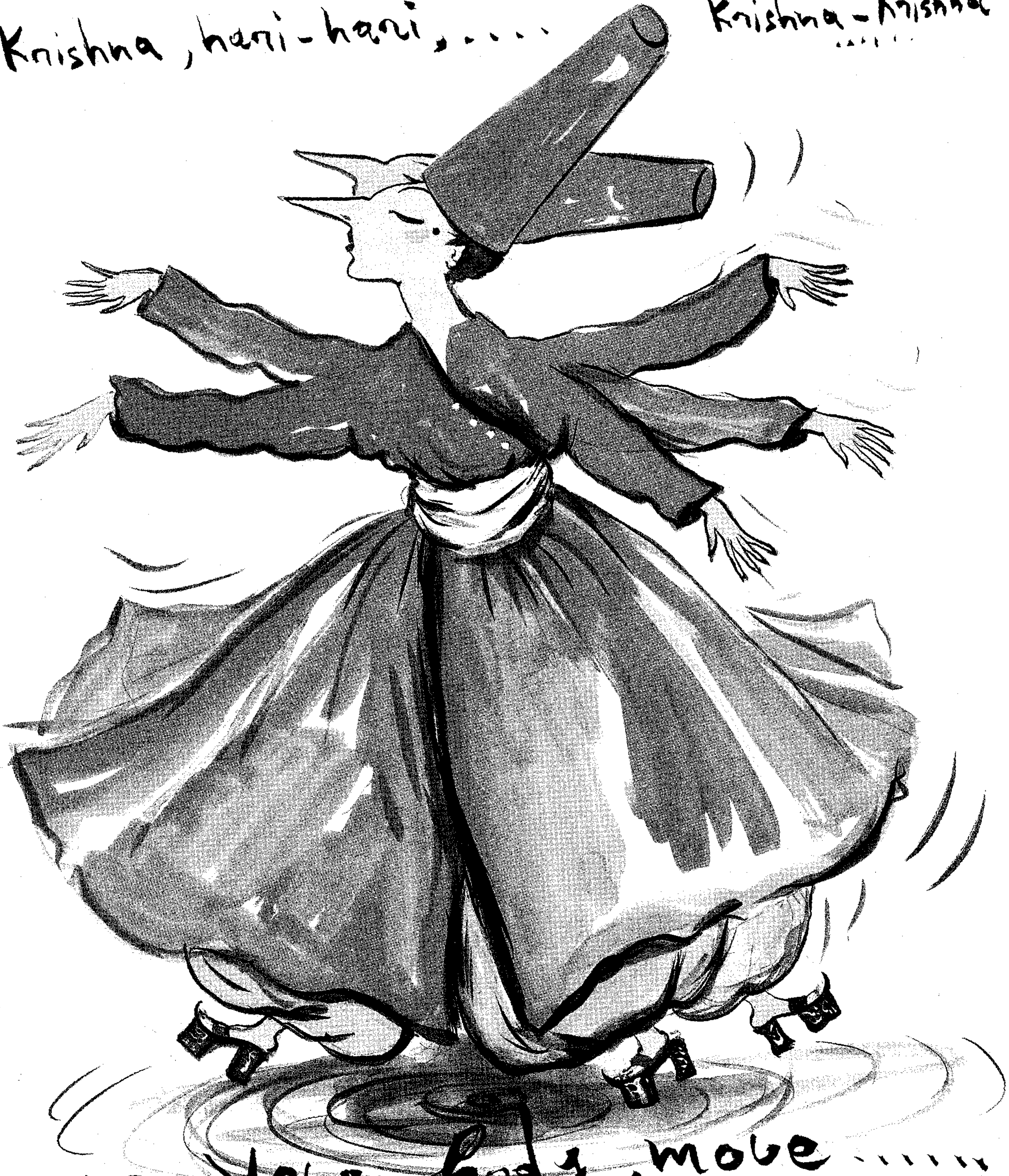
When we talked, Michaela strongly denied knowing that the Stasi had her down as an informer. As a historian, I am allowed to see the informer's actual files, and the archive may be able to trace Michaela's. A regular informer's file has three parts, compiled according to strict rules. Part 1 documents the biography of the informer, the way in which the Stasi has won that person's coöperation, usually confirmed by a written pledge to work as an informer, and his or her subsequent record, including photocopies of private correspondence and information given by other informers. Part 2 contains the informer's work: detailed notes by his or her Stasi case officer on the in-

WHIRL HISTORY

St. Irreverence watches over Konstantin Kakanias, a thirty-six-year-old artist who up to now has been best known for his scenes of sexual license cloaked in sly humor. Lately, his blithe imagination has turned to "Freedom or Death," a series starring one Mrs. Tependris, a "grande but simple dame" who channels dramatis personae from the Greek Revolution of 1821, ranging from Hellas ("chic and liberated!") to Veli Pasha ("RuPaul's great-great-aunt") to Byron. At the charming if well-hidden book emporium Stubbs, Inc., on East Fifty-ninth Street, the full panoply shows up in puckered gouaches, in a forty-six-piece ceramic dinner set, and in Stubbs's first publication. At right, the intrepid Mrs. Tependris inhabits a dervish, described in the volume's lexicon as "one of an all embracing sect of crazy people. They dance around themselves to reach the point of spiritual enlightenment which leads to abundant vomitations."

trying to discover esoteric enlightenment
as a whirling dervishe...

hari-Krishna, hari-hari, ...   Krishna-Krishna.....



move your body, move......
κούνα τό κορμί σου, κούνα......

formation the informer provides at regular meetings, the informer's own written reports, plans for further action, and so on. Part 3 consists of receipts for any expenses reimbursed or "premiums" paid to the conscientious informer.

Unfortunately, the archive can find only Part 2 of Michaela's file, and not all of that. Still, it is big enough: nearly six hundred pages, covering the period from 1976 to 1984—the Weimar years. It begins in June with Lieutenant Küntzel reassuring the IM candidate Michaela that, as he puts it, "our organ" had taken steps to insure that there would be no negative consequences for her because she had been caught taking hard currency out of the country illegally during an official trip to Hungary. Michaela is much relieved about this. She has feared repercussions for her future official trips abroad. A few weeks later, he visits her again, and records that she expressed readiness to work "with our organ . . . in respect of her professional concerns," but that she "feels herself personally unsuited for other tasks."

Two months later, she can report on a successful official trip to Switzerland: something that most East Germans could only dream about. And here I find the first handwritten report, signed "Michaela."

On September 15, 1976, Lieutenant Küntzel notes that their next appointment, on September 21st, will be the interview to recruit her formally as an informer. I can find no record of this meeting or of her written pledge to serve as an informer, both of which would usually be placed in the missing parts of her file. But Michaela certainly keeps providing information.

That autumn, for example, there is a prominent West German visitor to a local art gallery: one Helmut Kohl. Michaela reports that, encouraged by a certain comrade, whom she names, the attendants have been overzealous in their duties, "opening doors and making bows."

What follows is less amusing. At meetings every two or three weeks, a pattern interrupted only by her holidays and official trips abroad, she gives generously of her time and knowledge. She reports on the political attitudes of her subordinates: this one had criticized the expulsion of the dissident singer Wolf Biermann; that one showed "an almost bourgeois attitude toward various problems of our society." She supplies a five-page handwritten report on a visit to someone she describes as one of her best friends in the West.

Reading such a file, you see how an informer is gradually played in, like a fish on a line, starting with the initial resolve to talk only of "professional concerns" and ending up with the most private betrayal. For in the end Michaela informs even on the West German boyfriend of her stepdaughter. Under "Instructions to the IM on further measures," Lieutenant Küntzel uses the chilling words "*Abschöpfung der Tochter.*" *Tochter*, of course, means "daughter"; *Abschöpfung* is another Stasi technical term, laboriously defined in the 1985 Stasi dictionary as "systematic conduct of conversations for the targeted exploitation of the knowledge, information and possibilities of other persons for gaining information." The closest English equivalent is, I suppose, "pumping." So Michaela is to pump her stepdaughter for the secret police.

"Mario Patrizio, Conte di Cellini-Vasconi—Eurotrash or Eurotreasure?"

Perhaps she really thought she was just chatting away to Dieter or Heinz, showing that she was a good comrade and a loyal citizen, with nothing to hide. Harmless gossip, really. Yet we know that the Stasi paid particular attention to information that came from the IMs. Their seemingly harmless snippets of intelligence were stitched together into something much more harmful. That was how the whole system worked.

As I explore the intimate details of Michaela's collaboration, I stop to ask myself, "Should I really be reading all this?" And, even if I should, should you?

When writers or newspaper editors are criticized for publishing details of someone's private life, they cite "the public interest." But in practice their definition of "the public interest" is often "what interests the public"—that is, what sells more of their newspapers or books. Is there, here, enough of a genuine public interest to justify publishing material that will certainly embarrass Michaela and may even damage her relationship with her stepdaughter?

Fortunately, I manage to locate her stepdaughter and carefully explain the whole story. She already knows that her stepmother informed on her. She found out about it by reading her own file and, as a result, has severed all ties with her stepmother. This still leaves Michaela herself and her relationships with other people.

I discuss the problem with friends. Some think I should definitely publish. Others believe I should spare Michaela. "Otherwise you become like her," they say. "Now you're the informer."

WHAT of the full-time secret policemen on my case? For if I and my friends were the first side of a Stasi triangle, and the informers were the second, then they were the third. A few former Stasi officers have been talking to historians and journalists. The apparently senile Minister for State Security, Erich Mielke, was interviewed in prison for *Der Spiegel*. Markus Wolf, the longtime chief of foreign intelligence, has become a darling of the television talk shows. Some lesser-known Stasi figures have formed a so-called Insider Committee to explore the history of their ministry with more understanding than outsiders have thus far shown. They have also participated in workshops with former victims of the Stasi—a strange mixture of oral history and group therapy. One such group has met regularly for several years, chaired by an East Berlin clergyman named Ulrich Schröter.

I soon realize that the officers who are most ready to meet me are mainly from the foreign-intelligence service. What they were doing, spying abroad, was more like what "normal" secret services do, what all states do, so they feel they have less, or even nothing, to be ashamed of. Those whose business was spying on their own people are much less eager to talk. A few of them have, nonetheless, taken part in Pastor Schröter's discussion group. Schröter finds me an address for General Günther Kratsch, formerly the head of counterintelligence in the ministry and the most senior officer in my file.

CHIANTI
BURGUNDY
RIOJA

The officers directly responsible for investigating me, including Lieutenant Wendt and one Major Risse, head of the British section, worked in department 9 of Kratsch's counterintelligence division. Called Main Department II, it grew dramatically in the nineteen-seventies and eighties, from a small outfit of about two hundred people to one of the most important parts of the ministry, with a staff of more than fourteen hundred full-time workers at headquarters alone by 1989. Kratsch became one of Mielke's right-hand men. He was highly professional and quite ruthless, both on the job and in office politics.

Kratsch is said to be unwilling to talk. His address is, coincidentally, in the same pleasant but run-down village on the outskirts of Berlin where my girlfriend Andrea lived in 1980. So I can combine two very different visits to my past.

I make the long journey out on the S-Bahn, the old-fashioned suburban railway. Cobbled streets and then a dusty path lead to a bungalow with a fair-sized garden, enclosed by a rusty metal fence. I ring the bell. Frau Kratsch comes waddling to the gate. I ask for Herr Kratsch, and she reluctantly lets me in.

General Kratsch (Ret.) stands in gardening shorts, holding a rake. He's a thickset man with an enormous belly, a short beard straggling down a long double chin, and wary, piglet eyes. I explain that I'm a historian from Oxford, that his department had an OPK file on me, and that I would like to discuss it.

He hesitates for a long moment, then agrees to meet with me two days later.

As I leave, I ask for directions to the street where Andrea used to live.

"Oh, that's quite a walk!" he exclaims. "Let me drive you."

Now I hesitate, but he says, "Look, the Cold War is over, so I can give you a lift." Which he does, in his small Volkswagen.

After he drops me off, I discover that Andrea does not live there anymore.

When Kratsch and I meet again, he wants to start his story at the beginning. He was fifteen in 1945 (the same age as Michaela), and his father was absent, a prisoner of war. He had only basic schooling, then became an assistant in an ironmonger's shop. But he always yearned for adventure. He wanted to join the Navy, but instead they—"they" being the Party-state authorities—steered him to the ministry.

He trained in Potsdam, and was taught about the great British secret service, its matchless skills, its long tradition, its character as part of the development of imperialism, which was described by Lenin as "the highest form of capitalism." Then he was put to work in counterintelligence, on what they called "the English line." He marvelled that he, a twenty-two-year-old former ironmonger's assistant from Thuringia, was to foil the legendary British secret service. Later, he was put on "the American line," and then he was given charge of the West German department. Again, he had a feeling of incredulity.

Nonetheless, he had notable successes, especially with double agents. When one of them was caught, he liked to listen in on the interrogation. He wanted to know why they had done it.

And why had they?

Partly for money. Partly the thirst for adventure. And then there was what he calls "ideology": "They did it for freedom, as they would say."

What happened to them afterward?

Oh, of course they were sent down for long sentences.

Or the death sentence?

He hesitates for a moment. Yes, he says quietly, that, too, especially in the early years. But these people knew the risks they were taking.

I ask why the Stasi had me down for a spy.

Well, it's very simple, Kratsch says. As

ITALY IN THREE DAYS
CRAWFORD

"We're doing Assisi tomorrow. Myra wants to shop red leather jeans."

he has told me, they were taught to respect and fear the legendary British secret service. But from about the mid-sixties they could not find any more British spies. They were desperate. Of course, they knew who the career secret service officers were at the British Embassy. But where were their agents? Whenever an even halfway suspicious-looking Englishman came along, the Stasi immediately started investigating to see if he was a spy. They lived in hope but—as in my case—were usually disappointed.

I tell Kratsch that, the way he talks, one could almost forget that ordinary people were terrified of the Stasi. Had he never been frightened himself?

"Fear!" he exclaims, lifting both hands into the air, his huge belly shaking with indignation. Of course not! Not at all. People weren't afraid, they were grateful for the security! "They thanked us from above and from below."

Klaus Risse, the section head on my case, has moved to Dresden. When I telephone him, he says he would like to talk. He's interested in seeing the ministry's work described more "objectively." He has a strong Saxon accent and seems chatty, as the Saxons often are. He agrees to meet at my hotel for breakfast.

I study my photocopied pages from his personnel card and file. He was born near Dresden in 1938, and his father was killed at the front in 1944: the missing father again. An internal ministry questionnaire asks if he has ever travelled outside the G.D.R. His answer: "1954—1 1/2 Hrs Westberlin, with a friend, looking at the shops." In 1975, he moves to department II/9 in Berlin. From 1978 to 1983, he is the head of Section A, responsible for the British. His hobby is fishing.

On the personnel-card photograph, he looks rather ugly, but the man who's waiting in the foyer the next morning has a pleasant face and clear eyes. His opening line is much like that of his former colleagues: "I wanted to work for a better world." But soon he leaves that well-trodden path. The system went wrong, he says, because it was bound to go wrong, because of human nature. People can't be transformed, turned into something other than what they are. Communism failed to allow for what he calls "the inner *Schweinehund*." It could have worked only if people had been angels. His judgment is simple but not shallow: that was Communism's basic flaw.

Of course, he did not know this back in 1945, when the family started to rebuild from nothing. His father was dead. One of his brothers had been horribly run over by a tractor dragging antitank defenses through the village in the last days of the war. They were bombed out, all their possessions destroyed. From April to October, he went barefoot: "We were the poorest of the poor." But his mother kept them going. He did well in primary school, and the state gave him the maximum scholarship to go on to a boarding school. The state helped, but it was his mother who scraped and saved to buy his clothes and books, to see him through. His voice chokes with emotion at the memory.

At eighteen, he had to choose. He loved nature and wanted to study fisheries at university. Fishing was already his passion. But they—"they"—had other plans for him. They said, "Do something for the state, which has done so much for you." So he joined the ministry, working first in his local town, Pirna, then in Dresden, then in Berlin, but always on "Line 2"—counterintelligence.

Looking back now, he detects in himself a process of steady political disillusionment. He had a close friend on one of the collective farms who told him how things were down there, in the real world. He was maddened by absurd stories in the press about how the production targets of the Five-Year Plan were always being outdone. He saw the contradictions between theory and practice, and he despised the hypocrisy of rulers who—he quotes Heine—"in private drank wine and in public preached water." And there were things that came up in his work. He pauses, shakes his head: "For example, there's something I've never told anyone before. . . ."

In one of the training courses, while he was still in Dresden, the instructor read out a letter written by a woman to her husband, or perhaps it was just her boyfriend—he doesn't remember. It was such a wonderful letter, so wise, so deep, so full of inner warmth and love. His voice again chokes with emotion: "I've never forgotten it."

But why was the letter being read out to the Stasi officers?

"Oh, because the man was an informer, an IM." The woman obviously suspected something, but the Stasi case officer had worked out a line with the man and he had managed to keep her trust. "That's how you should work" was the instructor's message. But Klaus Risse received in his heart a very different message.

He did his job. But the doubts kept growing—or so he sees it now, with the ordering power of hindsight. He wanted to get out, he says, "but I didn't have the courage." He had no other profession. He was afraid of the consequences.

He now sells ventilation systems for restaurants. "The Western firms came looking for us," he says. "They knew we were able, hardworking people." But it's a tough new world, where money determines everything and people "walk over corpses." There are many losers here in the east. "Some people have already jumped out of the window in my apartment block." This Western system isn't the answer, either. But he doesn't know what is.

Meanwhile, his wife nearly lost her job when his name appeared on a list of Stasi officers published in the press. Even close friends had begun to doubt him after encountering the sensational revelations about the Stasi in the media—stories about torture chambers and so on. There were bad things, he admits, but they were in Department XX—which handled dissidents—not in his department.

So everyone I talk to has someone else to blame. Those who worked for the state say, "We weren't responsible—it was the Party." Those who worked for the Party say, "We weren't responsible—it was the Stasi." Come to the Stasi, and those who worked for foreign intelligence say, "We weren't responsible—it was the others." Talk to them, and they say, "Our department wasn't responsible—it was XX." Talk to an officer from Department XX, and he says, "But I didn't do it."

When the Communists seized power in Central Europe, they talked of using "salami tactics" to cut away the democratic opposition, slice by slice. Here, after Communism, we have the salami tactics of denial.

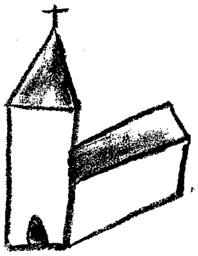
Before we part, Risse tells me that his wife didn't want him to see me: "When she came back last night, she said, 'You're crazy to talk to him. You shouldn't go.' "

Was she right? I think not. For I take away from this conversation the impression of an intelligent, fundamentally decent man who came, all too understandably from a difficult childhood, to serve his country in an evil place—a man who did not have the courage to get out but who has truly learned from his mistakes. As I walk back to my hotel room, there forms in my mind a startling sentence: "Klaus Risse is a good man." Not just a man with a carefully separated sphere of private decency but a man with a real goodness of heart and a conscience that is not switched off at the office door.

I have seen him only once, and seen him only as he is now, not as he was then, in uniform, inspiring fear. Perhaps then his face really was as ugly as it looks in the photograph on his personnel card. There may well be things he did or was involved in, horrible things, that he has not told me, or has preferred to forget, or has simply forgotten. Had I myself been a true victim of the Stasi, let alone a direct victim of his actions, I might feel very differently. But unless I find other evidence, I think him a good man.

THIS, in everyday life, is a process for which English has no word but German has two long ones: *Geschichtsaufarbeitung* and *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. "Treating," "working through," "coming to terms with"—or even "overcoming"—the past. It's the second round of German past-beating, refined through the experience of the first round, after Hitler. Now the lines of investigation, exposure, recrimination, and reconciliation have again crossed and recrossed the land.

Countries all over the world face this problem of "the past"—all the post-Communist states of Europe and Asia, the former dictatorships of Latin America and South Africa. Some countries, like Spain after Franco or Poland under its first post-Solidarity government, try to draw a thick line under the past: let bygones be bygones. Others have reacted differently. They have had trials: some that don't deserve the dignity of the name, like that of the Ceauşescus in Romania; and some more orderly show trials, like that of the former Communist leader Todor Zhivkov in Bulgaria. They have had administrative purges, like the Czechoslovak "lustration"—with its connotations, from the Latin, of ritual purification. In Chile and South Africa, they have had commissions for "truth and reconciliation."



Only the new Germany has done it all. Germany has had trials and purges and truth commissions, and has systematically opened the secret-police files to each and every individual who wants to know what was done to him or her—or what he or she did to others. This is unique. Apart from anything else, what other post-Communist country would have had the money to do it? The Gauck Authority's budget for 1996 was two hundred and thirty-four million Deutsche marks—about a hundred and fifty million dollars. This is more than the total defense budget of Lithuania.

The authority employs a staff of more than three thousand, from both east and west. By the end of June, 1996, some million seven hundred thousand vetting enquiries from public and private employers had been answered by the authority. In other words, one in every ten East Germans had been "Gaucked." In the same period, nearly four hundred and twenty thousand men and women had read their own Stasi records.

Two schools of old wisdom face each other across the valley of the files. On one side, there is the old wisdom of the Jewish tradition, that to remember is the secret of redemption, and also the wisdom of George Santayana, so often quoted in relation to Nazism, that those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it. On the other side, there is the profound insight of the historian Ernest Renan, that every nation is a community both of shared memory and of shared forgetting. "Forgetting," Renan writes, "and I would say even historical error, is an essential factor in the history of a nation." There is real wisdom on both sides, and the two wisdoms cannot easily be combined. The closest I can come to it is a prescription in several stages: find out, record, reflect, but then move on.

I FOUND Andrea. She had moved to an attic flat in a ramshackle villa with a garden running straight down to a pretty lake. She looked much as I remembered her—blond, smiling. We reminisced, cautiously but pleasantly, about our long-distant *amitié amoureuse:* "Do you remember . . . "

I told her about the file and then about the wild suspicion that came into my mind as I sat down for the first time at the little plastic-wood table in Frau Schulz's room in the Gauck Authority: how, that evening in Prenzlauer Berg, she had opened the curtains and turned on the light.

She was a little shocked. Surely I didn't suspect her of working for the Stasi? But yes, of course, she remembered that night. Actually, she didn't think she had opened the curtains. But she did turn on the light.

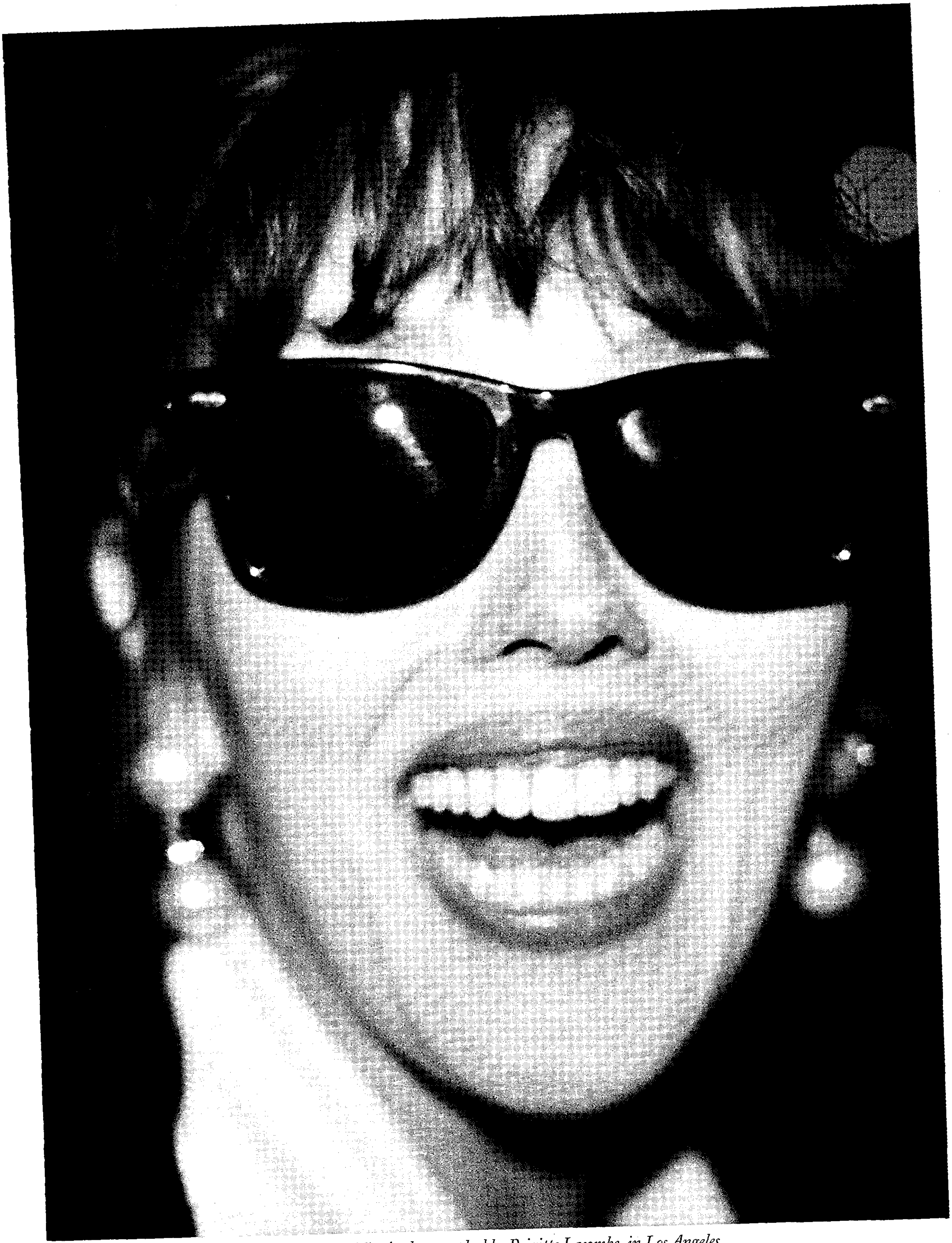
Why?

"Because I wanted to see your face." ◆

LES ARBITRES

When Isabelle Adjani was named head of the jury of the fiftieth Cannes International Film Festival, which takes place next month, that panel was assured a president with as high a profile as the festival's own. But when another Frenchwoman, Catherine David, curator of the Galerie Nationale du Jeu de Paume, in Paris, was named curator of this summer's Documenta—the huge art exhibition held every five years in Kassel, Germany—many art-world observers were surprised. She will be the first woman to curate the exhibition, and, as a relative newcomer, she may be just what the leviathan show needs to shake it out of its doldrums.

Catherine David, photographed by Gustavo Ten Hoever, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.



Isabelle Adjani, photographed by Brigitte Lacombe, in Los Angeles.

ANNALS OF ADVERTISING

ALL EUROPEANS ARE NOT ALIKE

But the global marketers have come up with a new strategy to get around it.

BY JOHN HEILEMANN

AMONG advertising people—a breed so convinced their vocation is as much art as commerce that they hold their own film festival every summer in Cannes—the dusty pages of the *Harvard Business Review* are not normally considered a must-read. But back in 1983, when Theodore Levitt, a professor of business administration at Harvard, published a widely noted article on the dawn of globalization, people in the ad business got all excited. Levitt declared that the age of the multinational firm, which was forever customizing its products and its advertising in dozens of ways for dozens of different markets, was over. In the new age of global markets—or, at least, regional markets, covering entire continents—the companies that would prosper, he argued, were those with products, like Coca-Cola and Levi's, whose ingredients *and* images were the same everywhere. Levitt's article was more polemic than reportage, but it was a portent of what, by the end of the decade, many multinationals would be demanding of their ad agencies: global advertising.

The demand was most fervent in Europe, where the arrival of the single market after 1992 promised to bring about just the sort of situation Levitt had described. Among the most powerful clients—mainly American corporations, such as Procter & Gamble and Gillette, but also European ones, such as Unilever—the new catchphrase was "the pan-European campaign": an ad that could run, more or less identically, in all twelve markets of the European Community. These clients contended that tastes were converging, and cultural differences eroding, throughout the region: "the Euroconsumer" was a concept much in vogue. Ad agencies, too, joined the euphoric chorus. In Britain, the brothers Saatchi, who had used Levitt's article to justify the acquisition binge that built their far-flung network, pointed to their global campaign for British Airways ("The World's Favourite Airline"), while McCann-Erickson touted its international work for Coke.

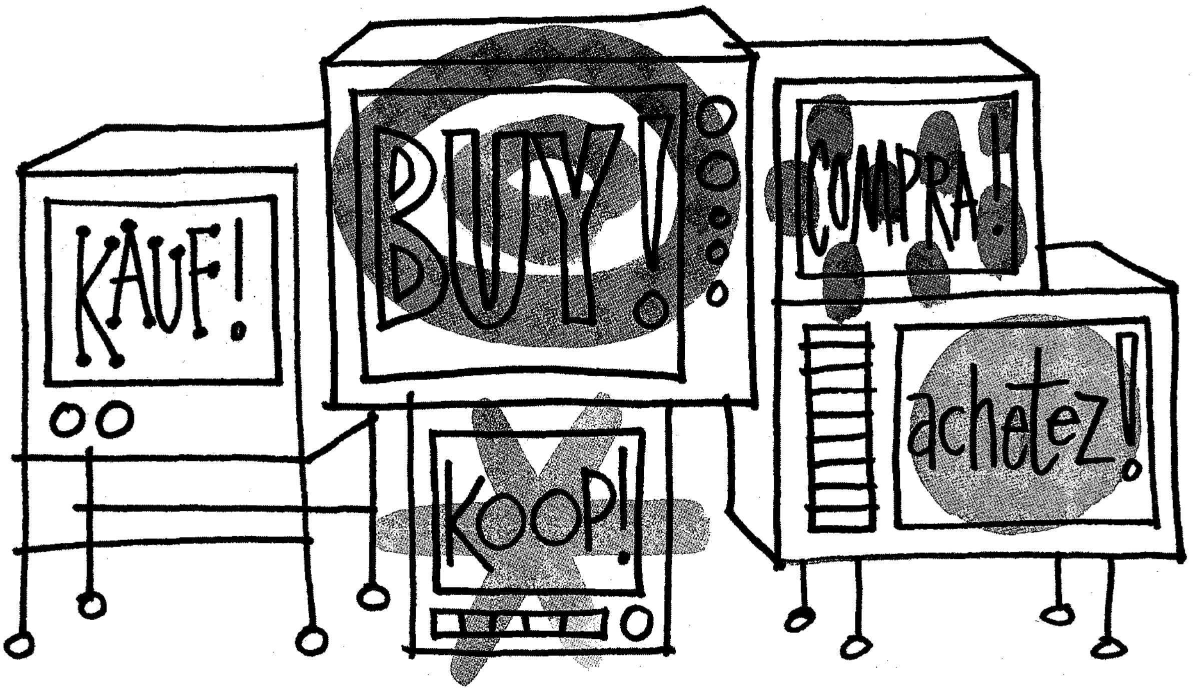
Today, the aim is the same, but the euphoria has faded. For much of the nineties, multinationals have been harmonizing their products' designs and packaging and manufacturing across Europe, but when it comes to advertising, the task has been incomparably more difficult. Differences in tastes and habits and language and life styles have proved to be stubborn. Nearly two years ago, the advertising agency Leo Burnett began work on two projects that turned out to make all this abundantly clear. The clients could hardly have been more different—Johnnie Walker Red Label and McDonald's—nor could the particulars of the campaigns. Yet from the two projects a lesson emerged that few admen, and even fewer clients, are prepared to admit: fourteen years after Levitt's article, and five after the dizzy utopianism of 1992, the Euroconsumer remains a rare, if not a mythical, beast—and one that continues to elude even the world's cleverest marketers.

LEO BURNETT is certainly one of those. Based in Chicago, with seventy-nine offices around the world, Burnett has created some of the most durable icons in modern advertising—the Jolly Green Giant, the Pillsbury Doughboy, Tony the Tiger—and it is behind three of the most potent global brands: Marlboro, McDonald's, and Kellogg. Triumphs of this sort are not easily replicated, however. The Marlboro Man wasn't originally intended for foreign consumption, but the cowboy turned out to be a powerful symbol of America in country after country. And a similarly unplanned rollout took place with Kellogg's Tony the Tiger. Unfortunately, today's clients don't want to take such chances. They want campaigns that travel from Day One, and this has spurred people in Adland to develop hyperrational approaches to what is, at bottom, an irrational art.

In a corner office in Leo Burnett's European headquarters, in London, sits Helena Rubinstein, a cheerful, dark-haired Englishwoman (no relation to the late cosmetics magnate) who is the mother of a technique that has become a central part of the way Burnett tackles pan-European assignments. What Rubinstein does, in her words, is "deconstruct brands," and if you visit her she can show you a breathtaking array of charts and diagrams that illustrate how she hacks a product's image down to its irreducible core—to what she calls "the DNA of the brand." As she explains it, "In regional projects, you always get the same response: 'That's all very well, but it's different in my country.' So the question is what elements are common to the brand that can be applied everywhere." To figure this out, Rubinstein guides the client's marketing officials and the admen through a two-day workshop, using reams of qualitative and quantitative research to identify in detail various aspects of the brand—its "personality," its "functions," its "differentiators," and its "source of authority"—and arrive at a concise statement of what the brand should stand for in market after market. The statement can boil down to two or three words. It is, in Burnett parlance, the brand's "essence."

Brand audits, as exercises of this sort are called, are a growing trend in international advertising. Norman Berry, the European creative director of Ogilvy &

Mather, says that a brand audit led his agency to realize that its client I.B.M. sells not machines but "solutions," and hence to create the global campaign "Solutions for a Small Planet." At the London agency Bartle Bogle Hegarty, the auditing process—there called "brand vision"—inspired a pan-European campaign for Polaroid. "Polaroid's problem was that they kept thinking of themselves as a camera," John Hegarty, B.B.H.'s chairman and creative director, told me. "But the 'vision' process taught us something: Polaroid is *not* a camera—it's a social lubricant. So you don't present it as a camera, or take pictures of happy families, or talk about how it's a record of the moment. Pox to all that! What Polaroid is really about is enjoying yourself." In one of the campaign's ads, a beautiful girl gets the attention of a rock star by flinging a picture of herself onto the stage; in another, a Japanese worker sends a scandalous photograph to a female boss who has humiliated him. The tag line: "Live for the moment."


KAUF!
BUY!
COMPRA!
KOOP!
achetez!

ANDERS WENNGREN

In July of 1995, Burnett won a chance to put Rubinstein's brand-essence approach into practice in grand style when it was awarded the Johnnie Walker account by United Distillers, the spirits arm of the British drinks conglomerate Guinness P.L.C. Johnnie Walker Red is the world's most popular Scotch, and the source of close to sixty per cent of U.D.'s profits. Yet in Europe the brand was in some trouble. Its market share was falling in a number of countries, and—what was more worrying—it was failing to attract the twenty-to-thirty-year-old drinkers vital to any alcohol brand's long-term survival. U.D. asked Burnett to create a pan-European campaign, led by a commercial that was designed to run in every market where liquor ads are allowed on television, with the goal of luring those young drinkers.

"In Northern Europe—in Germany and the U.K., especially—Scotch has an aging profile," Goff Moore, who is Burnett's worldwide account director for U.D., explained. Sharp-featured and sharp-tongued, with a double-breasted suit and a raffish air, Moore is a Brit who knows his liquor. When I asked him how various spirits were perceived in Europe, he riffed: "Gin is young and trendy and exciting, except in the U.K., where it's a stuffy old drink that majors and bishops and retired members of the Tory Party drink. Vodka is the party drink of Europe. Bourbon is sexy and imported—the whiskey of the new generation. Tequila is 'Let's get pissed.' And rum—well, Bacardi is the product of its advertising. Bacardi is escape." What about Scotch? "In Greece and Italy, it's a hip drink." And everywhere else? "It's 'my father's drink.' "

To unearth the essence of Red Label, a team from the London office, including its creative director, Gerard Stamp, and an account planner, Lucy Edge, went to Scotland on what they called "a journey of discovery." There they met Red Label's master blender and toured other distilleries on the "whiskey trail." Edge also delved into the research that had been done on the brand and on "young transitionals" in Europe in the previous five years. She found, she said, that the crumbling of the institutions of old Europe had left young people "full of uncertainty" and looking for new ways "to be their own heroes." At the workshop to settle on an essence, Edge presented her findings to a U.D. marketing team led by Jenny Vaughan, the worldwide brand director for Johnnie Walker. Red Label, everybody agreed, was a strong, fiery drink, and after hours of discussion the essence emerged: "impassioned empowerment."

I asked Moore what this meant, and he began by drawing an analogy with another U.D. brand: Gordon's gin. "There's something about the way a gin-and-tonic performs that's unlike any other drink," he said. Warming to his subject, he went on, "We call it 'potent effervescence.' When you drink a G. and T., it refreshes not only your palate but your mind—it sets you up!" Now he was rolling. "There's a wonderful Leo Burnett/Chicago ad for Dewar's that went, 'You never solved the world's problems over a glass of white wine.' There's something more serious about Scotch, more reflective. You go to the bar in the evening and you have a glass of Johnnie Walker, and you suddenly see things more clearly. You start thinking about what your life is going to be like. You don't necessarily have to get assholed. Drink is a social facilitator—it's an enabler—and when it's Scotch it's very much an empowerer. It empowers you to think in a much more positive way about what you want to do with your life."

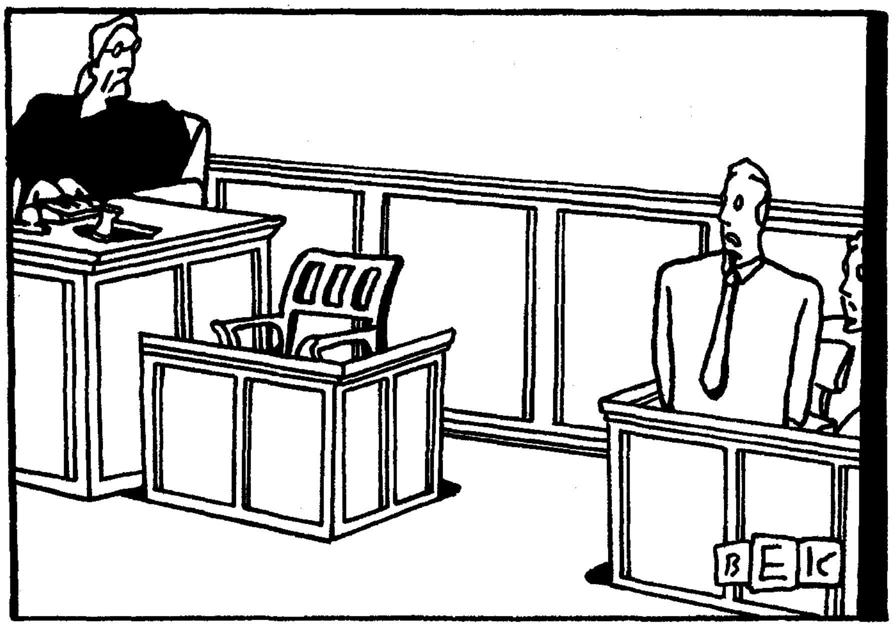
Translating all this into a commercial was up to Stamp and his creative underlings. Working from the brief "Red Label fires your spirit," they produced two rough ads, one called "Water of Life" and the other called "It all started with a Red Label," and presented them to Jenny Vaughan. In "Water of Life"—a literal translation of the Gaelic for whiskey—the hero attends the running of the bulls in Pamplona and, after he narrowly escapes being trampled, celebrates with a glass of Red Label. In "It all started," two friends agree, over a glass of Johnnie Walker, to go on a jungle adventure, which takes a comic wrong turn. Vaughan, who is thirty-four and Australian, with a sober demeanor that contrasts pleasingly with the prodigious liquor cabinet in her London office, liked both ads. " 'It all started' was appealing because it was about the concept of the drink inspiring you to do something you've always dreamed of," she said. " 'Water of Life' was about the idea that you should do great things in life, and not just the easy ones—like drinking Scotch instead of something reasonably tasteless." She paused. "Like vodka."

Vaughan had the two ads tested in every European market, and it was instantly clear that "It all started" was doomed. "Instead of thinking, They had the courage to fulfill their dreams, people thought, Oh, God, they've gone and got pissed and done something stupid," she said. (This, she observed, is the danger with any liquor ad that begins, rather than ends, with a drink.) "Water of Life" had troubles, too, but these seemed fixable. The main problem was that the Pamplona setting raised hackles. "People said, 'The Spanish don't know anything about whiskey,' " Vaughan said. More to the point, the ad bombed in Germany. According to Stamp, "The Germans didn't like it because it seemed reckless. Also, because of the German animal-rights campaigners, you can't show a goldfish in a goldfish bowl on German television, so a bull run was just not on."

Stamp went back to work, and soon he and his team came up with a new near-death experience to build an ad around. Called "Logs," the spot had its hero working on a construction project deep in the jungle. A storm breaks, triggering a chain reaction that sends an enormous log hurtling toward him. In a flashback, he sees all his life's most vibrant moments—birth, family, school, sex—and then, at the last instant, the log misses him, and he goes off and has a Red Label. Like virtually all pan-European ads, this one would avoid language barriers, not by dubbing (which is cheesy) but by avoiding dialogue. During the flashback, there would be a line of printed copy—"When your life flashes before you, make sure it's worth watching"—which could be translated market by market.

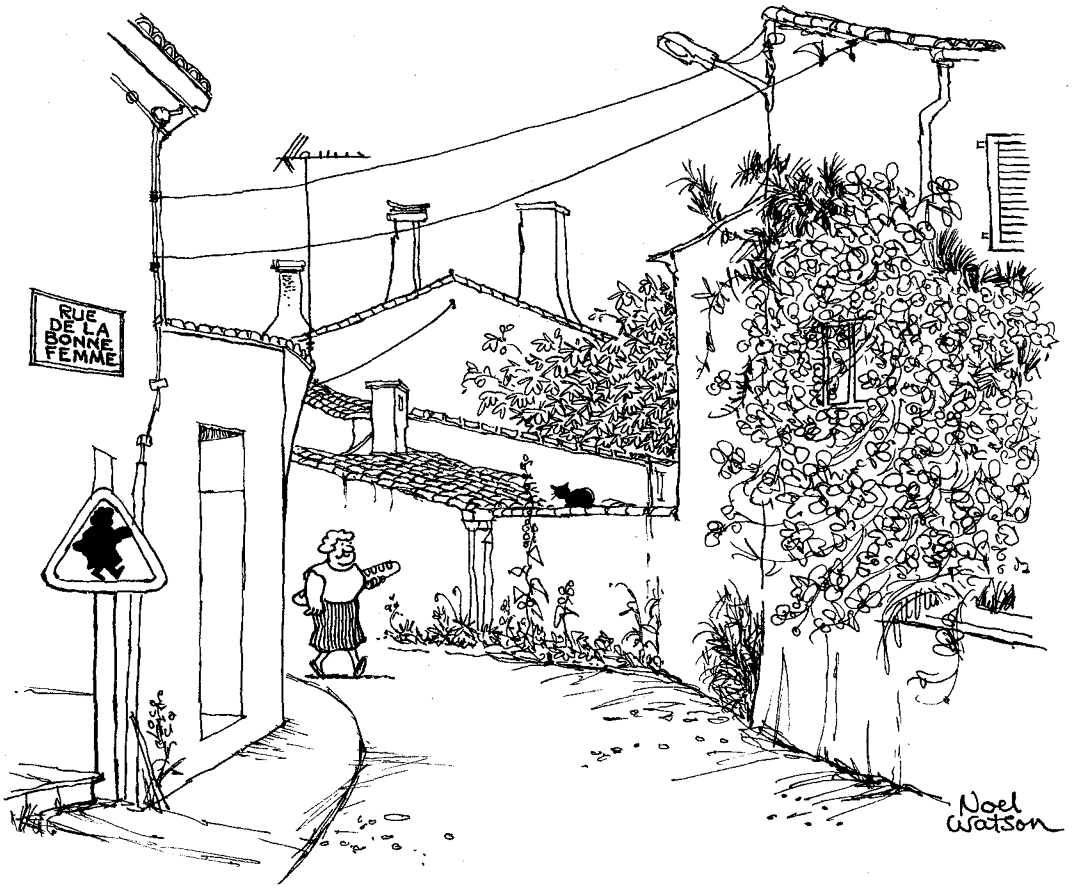
While all this was happening, a rival Burnett team, in Chicago, was developing an ad of its own. Called "Walk the Walk," the spot was a montage of shots of the "striding man"—Johnnie Walker Red's symbol—come to life and striding, as it were, alongside real people, to the beat of a pop soundtrack. Vaughan and the rest of the U.D. team weighed the two options. "Walk the Walk" had several things in its favor—most obviously, its use of the "striding man" and of the mnemonic association between the product and the slogan, both of which "would do a hell of a thing for branding," Vaughan thought. But "Walk the Walk" also struck her less as a campaign than as a single ad ("What would we do next?"), and less as an ad than as "an MTV video." Besides, the phrase "walk the walk" was an Americanism: nobody in Europe would have a clue what it meant.

So "Logs" it would be—although there were still cross-cultural hitches. To begin with, "Water of Life," which was being used as the tag line in "Logs," was baffling in many languages—"People thought it meant watered-down whiskey," Vaughan said—and so it was replaced with "Taste Life." Then there was the nightmare of translation posed by "When your life flashes before you, make sure it's worth watching." In market after market, either the words literally made no sense or the meaning was lost—presaging acute difficulties for the print version of the campaign. "A proverb in English isn't a proverb in Czech or Greek," Vaughan said, "and that's something we'd never really anticipated." In Portugal and Turkey, among other countries, the line had to be modified; in Italy no line runs at all; and in Germany attempts at translation were so maddening that the line was discarded and replaced with "Live every day as if it were your last." (Vaughan: "Basic words: 'live,' 'day,' 'last'—every language has those.")



"We, the jury, find the defendant guilty of killing her softly with his song."

Last August, "Logs" began its rollout across Europe, and in Australia and South Africa as well. A lavishly produced spot with the look—and the budget—of a John Boorman film, it is a hit with U.D.; the verdict of the marketplace will take at least a year to gauge. "We know we're going to get some older consumers saying they don't see Scotch this way, and that's fine by us," Goff Moore told me. "Because unless we can bring that twenty-to-thirty-year-old group into Scotch in a big way, those older drinkers will die off and there won't be anyone to replace them." (Not for nothing are the Johnnie Walker and the Marlboro accounts situated on the same floor of the Burnett building in Chicago; the admen call it the "sin floor.")


RUE DE LA BONNE FEMME
Noel Watson

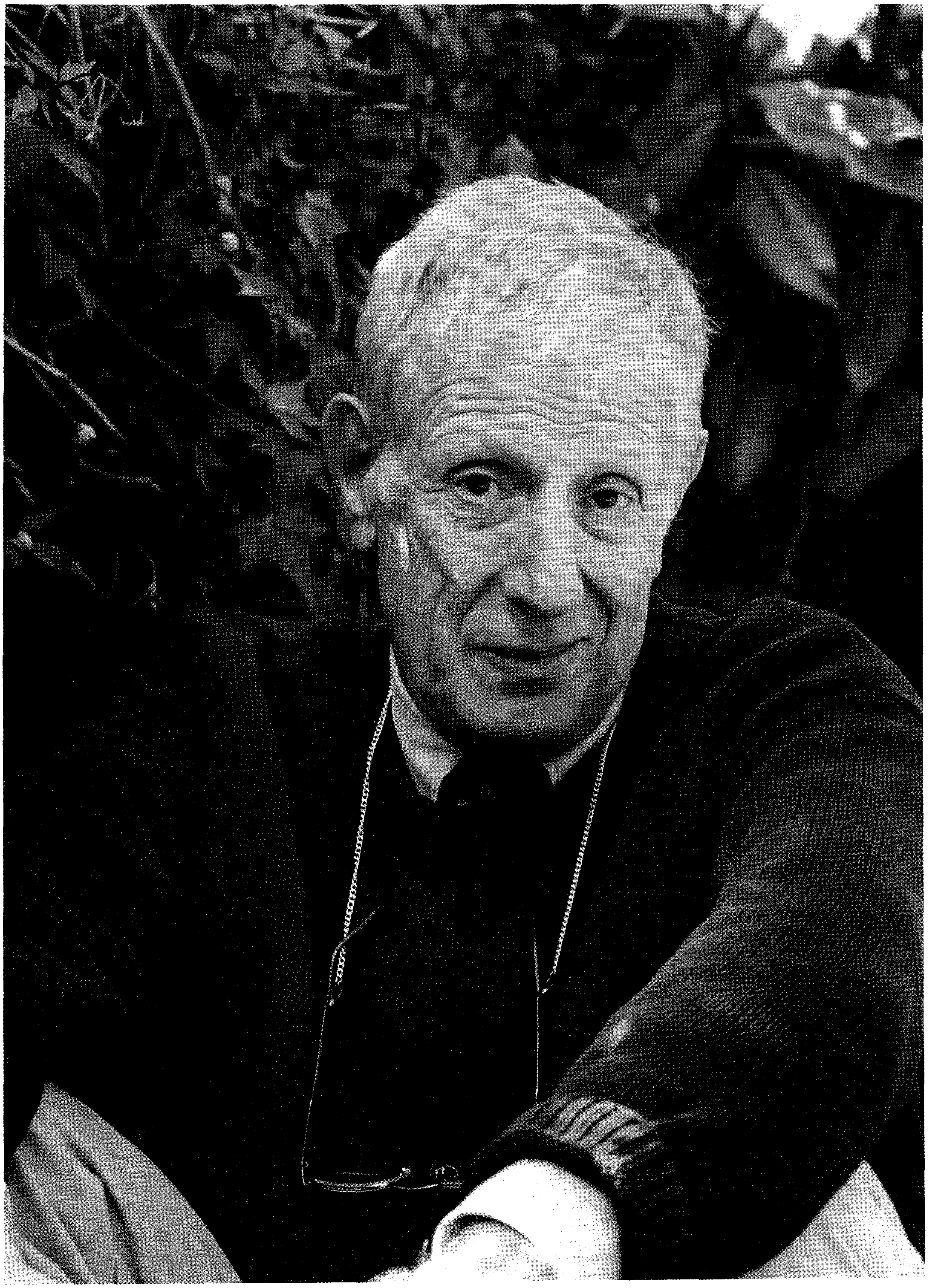
But when I visited Stamp in London he expressed reservations about his creation. The idea behind the campaign was plainly universal, he said, but to find an execution that would work everywhere required significant compromises. "I wonder if by making it cross borders, it's weaker than it would have been if we'd made it for one specific market," Stamp mused. He pointed out that, in tests, the Australian market had loved the version of the ad featuring the bull run, which Stamp himself had always preferred. "Logs," on the other hand, was "aspirational for Germans and Italians" but seemed to Australians at once too familiar and too full of echoes of "white imperialism and all that."

I asked Stamp about the wisdom of pan-European campaigns in general. "They can work, at times very well, but they by no means work on all briefs, and I don't think they should," he said. "Advertising that forces itself across borders just ends up being resented. The French resent it enormously when there's a British or an American influence—you can be fined there for advertising in English—and I don't blame them, actually. The assumption that the ideal would be, at some point hence, for all advertising to be able to work everywhere is to me a very depressing prospect."

DEPRESSING or not, in the past decade the quest for pan-European ads on the order of "Logs" has become, for many major clients, like the search for the Holy Grail. Recently, though, some large companies have decided that, while their advertising should have a uniform strategy and theme across the region, the ads themselves—the "executions"—can differ substantially from place to place, adjusting to the quirks of each local market. Which of these two approaches makes sense depends on a range of variables, but a critical factor is the type of product being sold.

For instance, food is intensely resistant to the single-execution approach. Eating habits seem to be the most locally rooted consumer habit of all, and the few firms that have managed to establish brands that reach across Europe have tweaked their advertising to take account of this. Arguably, the most successful pan-European food brand is Kellogg. To the untrained eye, Kellogg's advertisements for Frosties—as Frosted Flakes are called in Europe—seem to be exactly alike from market to market: there's Tony the Tiger, the kids, the sports, the sugar rush. But Al Roehl, Burnett's worldwide account director for Kellogg, told me I'd missed the nuances. Because of the different breakfast habits in Northern and Southern Europe—for example, Germans are brought up eating muesli, while breakfast in Italy is, he said, "dominated by biscotti"—the Frosties ads that run in Southern Europe include a few shots to "educate the consumer": the cereal being put in the bowl, the fruit being added, and, finally, what Roehl called "the milk-pour." (Burnett also deploys the milk-pour widely in Eastern Europe.)

Probably nobody has thought more about such matters than Donald Gunn, Burnett's director of creative resources, whose job is basically to look at more ads than anybody else alive. Each year, Gunn, a fifty-eight-year-old Scotsman with an affable manner and a musical voice, surveys maybe eight thousand television and print ads produced by Burnett and other agencies around the world. From this vast crop he culls the best and files them in something called the Great Commercials Library—a huge,



elaborately cross-indexed archive kept in the Burnett building in Chicago (though Gunn works out of London).

There are twenty-three product categories and two hundred and fifty-seven subcategories in the library, and when it comes to their aptness for pan-European advertising Gunn seems to have opinions about all of them. “Badge” products, like liquor or cigarettes, are ripe for single-execution campaigns, because they target a group whose tastes are definitely converging throughout Europe—conspicuous consumers. Functional products, like razors or detergents, are well suited to this approach, too, and so are products with images associated with a particular country, especially if the country happens to be America (Levi’s, Coke) or, at least, isn’t in Europe (with the exception of France, for perfume). Cars, on the other hand, are a lot like food: “A Mercedes has enormous cachet in Britain, but in Germany it’s a taxi,” Gunn says. He admires Volkswagen, which has taken the route of a European strategy with local executions. In Italy, a crew of battered, talking crash-test dummies marvel at a healthy Volkswagen dummy jogging by; in France a patient taking a Rorschach test sees every pattern as a leak under his car, until he’s presented with the VW logo, and he’s mystified: “It’s a banana?” “The Volkswagen driver is always the hero,” Gunn notes. “But the French ad is very French. It works by making someone else look stupid.”

MILLER’S HIGH LIFE

Getting Jonathan Miller to sit still in his London garden is like stopping a comet. Recently, the world’s most travelled director has staged Mozart in Salzburg, Puccini in Paris, Donizetti in Munich, and a smash-hit, street-smart “St. Matthew Passion” in Brooklyn. Miller, whose opera and theatre productions are often inspired by paintings and photographs, calls the constant border-crossing “a very well-subsidized art-historical course.” His real travelling, though, takes place in his famously well-stocked mind. For London’s National Gallery, he is organizing a show that will trace the use of mirrors and reflections in painting, and he is dreaming of a “Paradise Lost” to be staged “in some sort of warehouse or broken-down theatre—no angels falling about.”

Photograph by Dudley Reed.

Gunn can go on and on like this. One day when I was visiting him in London, he told me he had developed a presentation based on his conclusion that all great ads employ one of twelve “master formats.” As Gunn took me through the presentation, he offered a running commentary on why many of the formats were ill suited for crossing borders. Celebrity endorsements, for instance, are hard, unless the star is on the Michael Jordan scale. Testimonials are impossible, since they require dubbing. Pan-European ads often use voice-overs—with the voice customized for each country—and this, Gunn said, is one reason that the master formats involving narrative with dialogue tend not to travel well. Another reason, he argued, is that “stories are about characters, and the most resonant characters are culturally specific.”

In the presentation, and in several other lengthy sessions in front of his VCR, Gunn showed me what he considers the best ads that have run Europe-wide in the past few years. There was a spot for Pirelli tires with Carl Lewis racing through New York with treads on his feet. There was a spot for Dunlop tires in which a rotund, nipple-ringed demon ambushes a car with a falling grand piano, a river of soapsuds, a carpet of ball bearings, and a Velvet Underground soundtrack—to no effect. There was a spot for TAG Heuer watches that had a swimmer racing a shark, a hurdler leaping an oversized razor blade, and a relay runner grabbing a dynamite baton—all mind games that athletes play to juice their performance. There were two spots for Smirnoff in which peering through the bottle mimics the vodka effect: a necklace becomes a snake, a fat man becomes a walrus, a staircase becomes piano keys. There was a spot for Nike in which soccer stars, portrayed in giant murals, come to life and send the ball zooming around the world. And there was the Levi’s campaign—a series of retro vignettes that, as their creator, B.B.H.’s John Hegarty, says, “sell the land where the teen-ager was born.”

What was striking about these ads, as Gunn pointed out, was that in important respects they were much alike. They were highly visual and were frequently symbolic; they focussed not on the consumer but on the product; and they were often aimed at one of the two audiences that market researchers agree really are turning into Euroconsumers—the young and the rich. To me, what all this suggested was how daunting it was to create an ad for the whole of Europe, and Gunn agreed that it was so. “The debate used to be very polarized, between those who vehemently said that going pan-European was always right, and those who said it was always wrong,” he said. “Now people have realized that sometimes it’s right, but often—in a majority of cases—it’s wrong.”

I asked whether he thought the change had something to do with people growing less Panglossian about European union in general. “No,” he said. “It has something to do with people in advertising having learned better sense.”

In the summer of 1995, right around the time that Burnett was winning the Johnnie Walker account, the agency was immersed in the search for another brand’s essence: the essence of McDonald’s. In McDonald’s, unlike United Distillers, Burnett has a client that strives to maintain a consistent image in Europe (and, indeed, in the world) but whose marketing is distinctly local. Thom Kettle, McDonald’s vice-president for international marketing, told me flatly, “We’ve never commissioned a pan-European ad, and we probably never will.”

For McDonald’s, marketing in Europe is a function of its history. Unlike most multinationals, which expanded across Europe in a more or less orderly fashion, McDonald’s sprouted like Topsy. The company has been in England for twenty-two years, but in France there was no McDonald’s organization—only a scattered set of franchisees—until 1981, and as recently as a year ago there were just thirty-eight of its restaurants in the whole of Italy. With its businesses in Europe at such disparate stages of development, and contending with different competitors and eating habits, Kettle explained, it seemed natural to the executives at McDonald’s headquarters, in Oak Brook, Illinois, to let those businesses decide about their own advertising.

Among laypersons, of course, the common perception is that McDonald’s is selling the same thing everywhere in Europe—that, like Marlboro and Coke, it is selling Americanness. But when I

"Do you have a minute to talk about your retirement years?"

• •

suggested this to Florence Waterman, Burnett's European account director for McDonald's, she smiled a weary smile. Waterman is clever and well read, with a penchant for citing Derrida and Foucault to discuss, say, the first ad ever to feature Ronald McDonald. (He was played, with panache, by a young Willard Scott.) An American, she has been working on the McDonald's account in Europe since 1981. "To have the level of frequentation that McDonald's is seeking, it has to be in the fabric of everyday life," she said. Unlike Marlboro or Coke, she went on, "McDonald's isn't really a product. It may be a ubiquitous American brand, but what you have are hundreds of retail establishments around Europe, many of them decorated in local styles, to suit local tastes, and run and serviced by local people. What's left may come from America, but it's got to become very familiar and wholesome in terms of the local culture, and if it's American food that's an interesting accident."

Waterman is a believer in culinary localism. She can speak endlessly about the regional food splits of Europe—about the pasta belt and the wheat belt and the rice belt, and about the olive-oil belt and the butter belt and the pork-fat belt—and about how these splits affected the development of what is known in the trade as the Q.S.R. (quick-service restaurant) habit in each market. But she knows that, gradually, tastes in Europe *are* converging: "The real outré traditional foods are all in decline. Haggis is a tourist curiosity in Scotland now, and don't get me started on real French cheeses—or real Stilton, for that matter." She also knows that McDonald's is on its way to being an unremarkable presence everywhere in Western Europe, and that the company is working furiously toward this goal.

A couple of years ago, Waterman and Mike Allen, Burnett's international account director for McDonald's, began to worry. The advertising was inconsistent and sometimes themeless, designed mainly to drive up short-term sales rather than foster long-term growth. Worse, in too many places the ads positioned McDonald's as fashionable and exotic instead of wholesome. As an example, Waterman showed me several ads from the early nineties. One ad, produced by Burnett's Spain office, was a quick, highly generic rush of smiling faces and upbeat music. In another ad, created in Burnett's artsy Norway office, the proprietors and the staff of a Chinese restaurant taunt their customers—"No hamburger!"—while they devour a McDonald's feast in the kitchen. "None of this was bad advertising," Allen says, half convincingly. "It just wasn't the best expression of what McDonald's is really about."

So in July of 1995 Waterman and Allen called a meeting of the account directors and creative directors then working on the McDonald's account in all the European countries where the agency handled the brand—Britain, Belgium, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and Norway. The meeting took place over three days, in Paris, and its purpose was to agree on a brand essence that could be a basis for the ad campaigns around the region. Sheerly as a practical matter, this would prove difficult. The Swiss creative director hardly spoke English, and one of the Spanish admen needed to translate for his colleague.

Led by Helena Rubinstein, the group parsed McDonald's positive qualities: its appeal as a "family place," its appeal to kids, its speed of service, its "tasty food," and the McDonald's "magic." It also parsed the brand's negative qualities: "patronizing," "smiling but not genuine (faceless)," "unhealthy (not a real barrier but used as an excuse due to lack of information)," and the perception in Europe of the company as "Big Brother."

The group came up with mock job titles for the workers at McDonald's: "human-craving manager," "active fun-food entrepreneur," "guaranteed hunger satisfier." As the hours passed, a consensus began to form, with the account director from Norway as the sole dissenter: he insisted that none of the group's conclusions applied to his country. "I thought the Swiss creative director would be the most difficult," Waterman recalls. "But when I saw him trying, in broken English, to convince the Norwegian, I knew we were home." The essence of McDonald's, the group decreed, was "a trusted friend."

This was the simple part. Whether the exercise had worked or not would become apparent only when Burnett's European agencies began producing new McDonald's ads. Waterman had no illusions. "We were asking these people to reinvent locally something that a pure multinational, like Coke, would do once, from its headquarters, and then roll out all over the world," she said, and one day when I visited her in her London office, she showed me the results.

First, Waterman played an ad from Belgium, in which a small boy, obviously distraught because he has new eyeglasses, is taken by his mother to McDonald's, sees how the glasses seem to magnify the hamburgers, flirts with a little girl, and cheers up. In an ad from Sweden, a working mother who schemes to get out of a business meeting, only to have her boss cancel it, takes her daughter to McDonald's and sees the boss there with his son. In a British ad called "The Go-Between," a boy maneuvers his father into taking him to McDonald's, where the dad runs into his estranged wife and chats sweetly with her—to their son's delight. Finally, Waterman showed me a new ad from the avant-gardists in Norway: a stunning, elegiac black-and-white spot in which a boy is led by his grandmother through a city full of strange sights—long-haired, shouting men, Asian glam rockers, a girl with studs in her tongue—and arrives safely, in the end, at McDonald's.

Waterman is convinced that all these ads share a certain wholesome feeling, an intimation that "this is not a trendy place, this is a family place, this is a safe place, a place where you can be intimate—and then there's the food promise." In style and substance, though, they illustrate the point that, in advertising, narrative is inherently local. Burnett's office in Norway had considered running the Swedish ad, since the people look alike, but discovered that it "jarred," Waterman said, because of the perception that "family units are more intact in Norway." Similarly, "The Go-Between" would be awkward in Ireland, because divorce had only just been legalized there. And a new British spot, which never shows either a McDonald's restaurant or a single bit of McDonald's food, probably couldn't run anywhere else in Europe, because nowhere else is the level of familiarity high enough to risk it.

Such constraints are not strictly a European phenomenon. One recent McDonald's ad in Britain was called "Birds and Bees." It was written by Gerard Stamp, and was based on a conversation he'd had one day with his daughter. In the ad, a little girl is potting a plant. She looks up and asks her father where babies come from. After hemming and hawing, he tries to distract her by offering to take her to McDonald's. She happily accepts and then, as the father sighs with relief, she announces that they can talk about babies over Big Macs. By playing on a father's unease in discussing sex, the ad, Stamp said, "is quintessentially British." Mike Allen told me that he considered importing the spot to America, but the television networks objected. "Oh, yes, that's right," Stamp said, with a grin. "You don't *have* sex in America, do you?"

"NOTHING reflects a country and an age better than its advertising," Jean-Marie Dru, chairman of the French agency B.D.D.P., writes in his new book, "Disruption," and this certainly seemed true at Britain's Creative Circle Awards, in March. The Creative Circle dinner is the first of the year's big European advertising-awards shows—an event at which six hundred or so of London's most prominent young art directors and copywriters drink vodka, eat steak-and-ale pie, smoke cigars, and congratulate themselves on their creativity. Donald Gunn had invited me to the dinner, and we sat at a table in the back of the hall, taking note of which of the "films," as the European admen like to call them, had run throughout Europe. But there was not much to take note of. In a long reel of winners, only two ads were pan-European.

By the law of averages, as the sheer number of such ads rises the number of compelling ones is bound to increase. And the over-all number is rising fast. Among the mega-clients, some of the giddiness about the single market is no doubt gone. A European design consultant told me, "In the late eighties, companies were saying they wanted their colors to be blue and gold, because those were the colors of the European Community flag. But now they're the colors of bureaucracy, and nobody wants any part of them." Yet if the conceit of a United States of Europe has disappeared among the big marketers, the impulse behind that conceit is more powerful than ever. With manufacturing, research, packaging, and design all being consolidated and centralized, why should advertising be different?

Ad agencies, of course, think that advertising is very different, yet they have little choice but to go along—seeking the brand essence and the brand vision and all the rest. But this has done precious little to change their view that some of the sharpest insights come not from what consumers share but from what sets them apart—from the differences that, in Europe, have proved to be not only stubborn but, at times, a source of pride.

The winner of the top prize at this year's Creative Circle Awards, and one of the most talked-about ads in London of late, was a commercial for a drink called Blackcurrant Tango. The ad opens in Tango's headquarters, where the firm's "spokesperson" strides purposefully across the room, reading a letter from "Sebastian," a French exchange student, who tried a Blackcurrant Tango and didn't think much of it. The spokesman sneers: "You're an exchange student, aren't you, Sebastian? All hair gel and fancy loafers?" Faster and faster, the Tango man heads outdoors and through the parking lot, stripping off his clothes to reveal a robust belly and purple boxing trunks, and issues an indignant rebuke—"You're one dissenting voice in a billion, Johnny French!"—that turns into a challenge to settle things in the ring. By the end, the challenge has turned into an attack on all things Euro, and the Tango man stands in a field at the edge of the white cliffs of Dover, surrounded by cheering English fans, ready to fight. ♦

LETTER FROM PIGALLE

THE DAYS AND NIGHTS OF BLANCA LI

How a Spanish dancer brought high culture
back to the cabaret, and vice versa.

BY LUKE JENNINGS

RUBBER is not the ideal material from which to fashion a full-length flamenco dress. Complete with scallops and ruffles, the finished article can weigh several pounds, and the glued seams are liable to separate if they're subjected to a high degree of body heat. Such a dress is Blanca Li's preferred costume, however, and given that she performs her "fiestas" at night spots in Paris's Pigalle district, rubber is perhaps not entirely inappropriate. Tonight, assisted by a singer and two guitarists, Li is dancing a *siguiriya*. The club is the Divan du Monde, on the Rue des Martyrs; the auditorium is packed to bursting, and the spotlighted air is blue with cigarette smoke. Despite the whistling and the cries of "*Arriba*, Blanca," Li's focus is entirely inward, as the *siguiriya* demands. While her smoldering épaulement, sultry port de bras, and pistol-shot heel stamps are clearly the expression of some dark and fevered passion, it is equally clear that that passion is being held ruthlessly in check. This is real flamenco, and Blanca Li, with her lacquered and kiss-curled hair, her blood-red lips and her high Andalusian cheekbones, is the archetypal *bailaora de flamenco*. Some wry subversiveness in her long green eyes, however—not to mention that sweat-slicked rubber dress—undercuts the classic form, lending the performance a pungent, up-to-the-minute sexual chic.

By 1 A.M., the flamenco is finished, the late-night crowd has swung in, and the mood is more raucous. On the tiny stage, in a trashy blond wig and a Lurex dress, Blanca Li is singing "L'Amour est un oiseau rebelle," from "Carmen." What her voice lacks in quality—which is a considerable amount—it makes up for in volume. She screams, she swears, she writhes on the stage; at one point she appears to expire. Other performers follow her: Kalifa, a dwarf in a bouffant wig and high heels who murders a Piaf song; Lola, a drag queen who performs the same service for Mireille Darc; Florence, a transsexual who delivers a short technical dissertation on how to have sex with five men at once. Hours later, or so it seems, the cabaret closes with a fashion-show pastiche. To a commentary by Blanca Li, a series of apparently drug-ravaged "models" shuffle on and off, clawing at their forearms, sniffing, and staring into space in vacant misery. "*C'est très pratique*," Li intones as another bundle of fouled rags is paraded across the stage. "So simple, but *so* effective." The audience, dazed—but not so dazed as not to have been hip to every sly reference, every coded sally—stumbles out into the Paris dawn.

"Les Fiestas de Blanca Li" were first unleashed on the French capital in January, 1993. Li, an ex-gymnast and former bar proprietor who had been trained in flamenco and contemporary dance, moved to Paris from Madrid and, knowing no one, decided to throw a series of cabaret parties. Her goal was to introduce herself to the artistic demimonde, which she intended to inhabit, and, ultimately, to create a contemporary-dance company. In search of a suitable site for her cabarets, she toured Paris's night spots—tourist clip joints, for the most part—and inquired at each whether the place could be rented. Most proprietors simply stared at her; some were abusive. At a tiny strip club on the Place Pigalle named Le Narcisse, however, the manager listened. Establishments like the Sexodrome, a multilevel interactive porn palace on the adjacent Boulevard de Clichy, had led to a falling off in demand for old-fashioned striptease, and he was feeling the pinch. He agreed to rent Li the club every Thursday.

The Thursday fiestas, publicized almost entirely by word of mouth, were an immediate success, and, to the bemusement of locals, the dusty little Narcisse was soon playing host to a celebrity clientele. The director Pedro Almodóvar came, along with his actresses Rossy DePalma and Victoria Abril; Nina Hagen was a regular, and so were Lenny Kravitz and his then girlfriend, Vanessa Paradis; the fashion crowd turned out in force, led by Christian Lacroix and Paco Rabanne, followed by the whole louche, glittering underbelly of Paris society.

Four years have passed, and the fiestas continue. The word goes out, regulars receive an invitation, and an event is born. Not surprisingly, there have been many offers to turn "Les Fiestas de Blanca Li" into a regular nightly show, but Li has always refused such suggestions. If her cabarets were formalized, she explains, she would lose the freedom to make them as "bad" as she chooses: "And my intention is to present absolutely the worst cabaret in the world." One night, upon being greeted at the door by Lola, who was also the m.c. for the evening, audience members were handed tomatoes and encouraged to throw them at the stage as the fancy took them. What they were not told was that the performers would unhesitatingly respond in kind. As it happened, this was the night that Madonna dropped by. Li's flamenco segment passed without incident, but shortly after the beginning of the cabaret segment there was an exchange of fire. "It was as if it were taking place in slow motion," Myriam Schaeffer, a designer for Nina Ricci, who was present, recalls. "A tomato came flying from the stage toward Madonna and—splat!—right in the neck." The singer hurriedly departed, not out of displeasure, as she later explained to Li, but from fear that a chair-throwing brawl would develop, as it undoubtedly would have in New York. The Spanish Ambassador's wife was also in attendance, but she sat tight and, the next day, simply instructed her hairdresser to remove any vegetable matter that might have lodged in her coiffure.

For all the apparently chaotic nature of Li's fiestas, their success has been no accident. Li knew from the start that the last thing she wanted was a smoothly running show or a passive, well-behaved audience. Paris was full of such affairs, and Pigalle and Montmartre, in particular, were stuffed with stale floor shows and oh-là-là disrobings; the area was a theme park, and insiders had avoided it for decades. Li offered the classic Parisian-cabaret ingredients of dance, *travesti*, and standup comedy but presented them with a sharp postmodern twist, and it was in appreciation of this twist, rather than out of some collective jaded whimsy, that she was adopted by fashionable Paris. She kept an artful control of her own image: aware of the limitations of ethnic typecasting, she insured that every time she danced flamenco she reappeared later in the evening in a more scabrous mode. Li, twenty-eight at the time of her arrival, was a woman with a plan, and setting herself up for fifteen minutes of fame on the señorita circuit was not part of that plan. What she was establishing—as much by instinct as by calculation—was the low-culture credentials that in nineteen-nineties Europe are a prerequisite of any high-culture endeavor. Art has learned an important lesson from fashion: grab the headlines with the preposterous, and use the publicity to feed your serious endeavors. "You have to be a chameleon and able to adapt," Madonna says. "I can relate to that. I love it that you can't easily describe what she does. She takes cabaret and turns it inside out. The shows are simple, but they have great power." Blanca Li's cabarets were, and are, an indulgence in the service of an ambition, and that ambition is the furtherance of her modern-dance company, La Compagnie de Danse Blanca Li.

The success of Blanca Li's fiestas has been no accident.

JAMES DIGNAN

It is 10:30 A.M. on the first day of spring, and Li has driven me from Paris to the northwestern suburb of Nanterre, where she is about to rehearse her company. She drives her ancient Renault with the abandon that characterizes all her performances, and, among other excitements, the journey has featured a collision with a lamppost and the sideswiping of several other items of street furniture. As a finale, while parking in front of a private exit—*"Stationnement strictement interdit"*—she rams an ambulance.

La Compagnie de Danse Blanca Li has a permanent strength of eight female dancers, and today they are rehearsing sections from the Manuel de Falla opera "La Vida Breve" and his ballet "El Amor Brujo," which Li is choreographing for the Opéra de Nancy et de Lorraine. The opera company's director, Jean-Marie Blanchard, attended one of Li's cabaret evenings shortly after entrusting her with the commission, and it occurred to Li, as she simulated oral sex with a line of loutish soldiers, in her unique version of "Carmen," that she was perhaps not showing herself in an ideal light. The commission stands, however, and will première next month.

Today's rehearsal takes place in the broad, sunlit dance studio of the Maison de la Musique de Nanterre, whose director is sympathetic to Blanca Li's ambitions. Every company rehearsal is preceded by a classical class, given by Raquel Boismene, the company's seventy-year-old ballet mistress, who gave up her teaching practice and life in Madrid to follow the aspirant choreographer to Paris. Li greets the teacher fondly and then, having exchanged her wraparound skirt and motorcycle boots for dancewear, launches the company into a run-through of "El Amor Brujo." Physically, with her steel-muscled arms and serpentine, toreador hips, Li is highly distinctive. "She is like La Maja," says the designer Azzeddine Alaïa, who is a close friend of hers and a regular at her cabarets and stage shows. "She has a sort of nervous, purebred quality." Like de Falla's music, Li's choreography has subtly complex crosscurrents: in character, it is ritualistic and at times almost pagan. She leads her dancers from the front, hurling down the counts like firecrackers, her taut-wired body flung about by the music as if by some delinquent spirit. No trace here of the tawdry, ironic diva of Pigalle. "When it comes to my choreography," Blanca Li says, "I am a soldier."

Her dancers, following her, reveal themselves as long-haul professionals. Paris is something of an international clearing house for dancers, and Li's company is typically multicultural: two of the dancers are French, two are Italian, three are Spanish, and one is Japanese. At first sight, they do not appear to be an especially homogeneous group, but as I watch them rehearse I realize that every face displays a level-eyed calm; a calm that tells of their preparedness to see a morning's work annulled in a finger flick, if necessary, in favor of a better idea. And, for all the situation's apparent irregularity, this is work most dancers would kill for. To dance for Blanca Li is not only to perform cutting-edge choreography but also to be paid a good wage by a scrupulous businesswoman. (During layoff periods, she also supervises the dancers' unemployment benefits.) Later that day, I am to accompany Li to the offices of a production company for which she is choreographing a techno-music video, and twenty-four hours later we will attend a meeting at a fashion college whose end-of-year show she is arranging. "I don't tell my dancers half the things I do to pay their salaries," she says. "I don't want it to be their worry."

The dancers, who know that behind each of them, in an invisible line, wait hundreds of their colleagues who would do the work in return for bus fare, repay Li with a total commitment: they are here for as long as it takes to get it right, and no one struts or frets. They conserve their energy, for Li is famously exacting. There are no mark-throughs; everything is danced full out. This is hard, but it is also the fastest way to lock choreography into the physical memory. Rehearsal time is money, and Li's company receives no government subsidy.

Blanca Gutiérrez was four when she first looked through a studio window in Granada, Andalusia, and saw a dance class in progress. The sight made a deep impression on her, and she begged her mother to allow her to take part. There were five Gutiérrez children at that time, however, and four of them were girls. If one of them was to receive dance classes and flamenco skirts and high-heeled polka-dot shoes, Señora Gutiérrez reasoned, then they all should, and in order to supplement her husband's income at the Banco de España she established a small cleaning business. Within a year, though, the cost of the tuition had become unmanageable. The sisters were withdrawn from the school, and it was not until Blanca was ten, and the family had moved to Madrid, that dance classes were resumed.

Six years later, Blanca decided to further her dance training in New York. The evolution of the plan was pure Blanca. In 1980, while she was waiting to meet a boyfriend on the street in Seville, she fell into conversation with a German journalist named Michael von der Goltz. They were immediately taken with each other: von der Goltz told her of his interest in bullfighting, and Blanca told him of her dissatisfaction with her life as a member of Spain's national rhythmic-gymnastics squad, which was where all those dance classes had led her. For four years, she had fit rigorous early-morning and late-night gymnastic-training sessions around her school schedule, with the result that her body, overstrained, had stopped developing. At sixteen, she had the physique of a twelve-year-old, and she was desperate to find a change of pace and direction. Had she, von der Goltz inquired, considered contemporary dance? Had she heard of Martha Graham?

The journalist and the gymnast became close friends (although not lovers, Li says). Fired with enthusiasm, her path now clear to her, Blanca asked her parents to allow her to study dance in New York. When they refused—she was still a minor—von der Goltz came to her house, charmed the family, allayed their apprehensions, provided Blanca with money and accommodations in New York, and saw her enrolled in the Martha Graham School. It was 1981.

Blanca remained in New York for five years. She took classes at both the Martha Graham and the Alvin Ailey schools and returned to her flamenco studies, under Carmen Rubio. "This was when I discovered how easy it was, and how dangerous," Li says of flamenco. The danger, she explains, lies in the ease with which an impression can be made. The image of the hot-blooded *bailaora* is a potent one, and "once people see you as a flamenco dancer they won't let you be anything else." At the other extreme, no other dance form is as susceptible to snobbery as flamenco. A performance has only to be announced to be damned by the inner circle as commercial, impure, and "not real flamenco." Invariably, the dress or the expression is wrong, or the arm movements display inappropriate influences. "And even if you get everything right," Li continues, "but you're not a *gitana*—a Gypsy—then you've still got it wrong, because they say that only Gypsies can dance real flamenco."

Blanca Li sees the ideal accompaniment as two or three guitarists and a pair of singers. Conventionally, the guitarists play first, dictating the tempo—slower for a *tiento* or a *siguiriya*, for example, and faster for a *tango* or an *alegría*. The singers join in, and, finally, the dancer begins to dance. In New York, she turned the form on its head by starting a group of "flamenco-rappers," called Blanca and the Xoxonees, who performed at the Gas Station, Danceteria, the Kitchen, and other night spots of the early eighties. She fell in love with Etienne Li, a Franco-Korean graffiti artist and mathematician, and to this day he remains her lover—calm to her storm. They are not married, but she has taken his name.

In 1986, Etienne was posted to Morocco as a teacher. Not wishing to remain on the opposite side of the Atlantic but anticipating little prospect of advancing her ambitions in Marrakech, Blanca moved back to Madrid. She re-formed the Xoxonees with an all-Spanish lineup, and the group was soon recording for CBS. "Suddenly," Li says, "we were like rock stars, performing in huge venues. It was strange." With the decisiveness that has marked every stage of her career, she dissolved the Xoxonees at the height of their fortunes. Her long-term plan was to found a contemporary-dance company: a reputation as the front girl of a novelty pop group, however successful, might well count against her in the future.

On January 1, 1990, Li took out a lease on a small bar, El Calentito, in Madrid's Plaza del Callao. There she tended the bar, played South American dance music on the stereo, and insured that every night was a party. "Everyone came," she recalls. "Gays, immigrants, artists." Downstairs, there was a makeshift stage, and, although El Calentito had no cabaret license, Li would put on impromptu flamenco performances several times a week. These, she explains, were as much for her own pleasure as for that of her audience. "Flamenco I love because it's lonely," she says. "You're so alone. You close your eyes and you're in a different place every time. It's like flying." The designer Paco Rabanne, himself of Andalusian ancestry, describes Li's flamenco dancing as having "the quality of a flame, of fire."

The police raided the bar regularly but never actually succeeded in closing it down. "I just like to dress like this," she would tell the policemen who discovered her in full flamenco costume and drenched in sweat. With its quasi-legal status and "post-*movida*" ambience, El Calentito was a resounding success, but there were the usual occupational hazards. One afternoon, saddened by the *boleros* that were playing on the hi-fi, a Peruvian customer smashed a bottle and slashed his wrist with the glass. The waiter fainted, leaving Li and a female friend to get the rapidly exsanguinating Peruvian to a taxi stand. "Claudia dragged him out, and I followed her, scrubbing up all the blood," Li recalls. "Blood on the pavement outside a bar looks *so* bad."

During her trips to see Etienne in Marrakech, Blanca had made contact

Blanca Li had a plan, and fifteen minutes of fame on the señorita circuit was not part of it. Photograph by Peter Lindbergh.

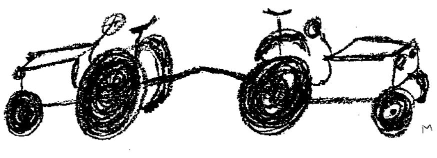
with and been inspired by Gnawa, Morocco's trance music. By 1992, the profits from the bar had enabled her to form a choreographic group, and she created a program incorporating Gnawa. This was well received at Seville's Expo '92, but Li was not optimistic about the group's future. "In Spain there is no audience for dance," she told me. "Nobody gives a shit about culture." Etienne's teaching contract in Morocco was expiring that year, however, and he had been offered work in Paris. The French, both the Lis knew, subsidized dance heavily. It all seemed to make sense.

Blanca Li's first major work, "Nana et Lila," was created with the assistance of her El Calentito proceeds. The piece combined the traditions of flamenco with those of Gnawa, and was presented at the 1993 Avignon Festival. Initially, at least, events there seemed to conspire against the choreographer. The company had not been officially invited to take part in the festival, and so, together with a number of other fringe groups, the Lis paid a deposit on the hire of a theatre. Shortly before the dancers left Paris, however, the theatre was declared bankrupt and sealed. A week of rehearsal time was lost, and the theatre was reopened only after the intervention of the Ministry of Culture. Then, on the morning following the dancers' arrival in Avignon, bailiffs appeared at the house the company had rented and removed all the furniture.

Despite these setbacks, ultimately the company won the prize—the Prix Coup de Cœur du Off—for the festival's best fringe dance production. The dancers were then invited to perform in Berlin, but after a short season there the company was paid only a fraction of the promised fee, and Li had to borrow heavily to prevent its dissolution. Somehow or other, they survived and made it back to Paris, and in May of 1994 they presented a Paris season at the Théâtre le Trianon. The cabarets continued, Blanca worked as a choreographer for films and fashion shows, and she played the role of a transvestite drug dealer in Karim Dridi's film "Pigalle" (several scenes of which were shot at Le Narcisse). All these activities enabled her to hold her company together and to continue paying her dancers' salaries. Then, in the fall of that year, uncertain whether she would ever be able to afford to finish it, she started work on her second full-length show.

"IN 'Salomé,' I was inspired by the Oscar Wilde play, but also by all the love stories I'd seen played out in my bar," Blanca Li says. We are sitting in the living room of a large flat on the Rue de Clichy which Blanca and Etienne share with Lola. It is after 6 P.M., but so far, beyond fishnet tights, black high heels, and a coral bra and slip, Lola's look for the evening remains unresolved. Later, he will retire to a room that has a reproduction of Jan van Eyck's "The Arnolfini Marriage" on one wall and a selection of whips laid out on the mantelpiece, and *create*. ("I felt I had walked into a Fellini movie," Madonna says of an occasion when she was asked to dinner on the Rue de Clichy.) The final result—as yet hours away—will owe something to Shirley MacLaine in "Irma la Douce" and something to the headhunting Montagnards in the final scene of "Apocalypse Now." Blanca, muted by comparison, has changed into steel-capped work boots, cerise Lycra pants, and a tie-dyed nylon shirt. Eventually, we may all be going to the Bains Douches night club, but for the moment we are lounging on Moroccan divans and drinking Earl Grey tea. Evening sunshine suffuses the white-painted walls. "With a company of girls," Blanca continues, "I thought it would be interesting to do a piece about *desamor*, about unrequited love."

"Salomé" had its première in 1995, and it placed Blanca Li firmly on the European choreographic map. The part of John the Baptist is played by a leather-clad acrobat suspended in a steel cage beneath which Li's dancers, in costumes hung with bells and keys which were designed by the Madrid couturier Sybilla, attempt an increasingly desperate series of seductions. The lyrical dance of the seven veils is performed high above the stage, with the dancers suspended from ropes of entwined fabric. "The ballet in the air," Li explains, "is the representation of the love story in your dreams, the dreams of *desamor*, of impossible love." In the course of choreographing "Salomé," the Lis discovered that they were broke. The piece, which comprised five acts, was completed with the financial assistance of Sybilla and of Pedro Almodóvar, and when it was shown at the Pompidou Center, in Paris, the normally half-empty auditorium was packed to capacity. In Dunkirk, the manager of the Bateau Feu theatre was so amazed by the full houses the piece generated that he ordered an audience survey.



Audiences adored "Salomé"—"*Un spectacle séduisant en diable*," declared *Le Figaro*—but not everyone was impressed. When, in the spring of 1996, Li applied to the Ministry of Culture for a grant for her company, she was refused. She and Etienne, as was their right, arranged a meeting at the Ministry to ask on what grounds funds had been withheld and were told that a negative recommendation had been made to the fifteen-member commission of critics, choreographers, and directors which decides who should be supported. Part of the recommendation was read out to them. Blanca Li had no choreographic language, they were told, and her work lacked intellectual content.

Françoise Rougier, a spokesperson for the Ministry, vigorously denies that funding decisions are made on this basis. "The fact is that we receive several hundred funding applications, of which, sadly, we are in a position to help only seventy or eighty," she says. Patrick Bensard, a former member of the commission, similarly maintains that the Ministry is benignly disposed toward Li. "It takes time," Bensard says. "She's an outsider who's becoming important—the new Mata Hari."

Depressed but undaunted by the Ministry of Culture's refusal to provide her with financial assistance, Li produced "Pète Pas les Plombs" ("Don't Blow a Fuse"). The piece is about stress, insomnia, and the waking-dream state, and it accurately reflects Li's mental condition at the time of its creation. Seriously in debt since the Berlin debacle, the company could not afford to hire male dancers, so Li bought secondhand store mannequins instead. There were not even enough of these to go around, so several of the eight female dancers had to improvise with the cardboard boxes that the dummies were delivered in. Other cardboard boxes served as costumes and sets. The result, set to a banshee instrumental score, is genuinely nightmarish, transporting the spectator from Stone Age chaos to a nihilist Otto Dix-style debauch. "By the end," Li recalls, "I was so exhausted that I hardly knew what I was doing." "P.P.L.P.," as it came to be known, had its première in the Paris suburb of Suresnes, in January of this year. Li could hardly bear to watch. "And then," she says, "it was over, and the audience was standing up and cheering." *Le Monde* proclaimed the event "*le chic en plus.*"

Earlier this month, despite the success of "P.P.L.P.," Li was informed that the Ministry of Culture had refused her latest application for funding. "One critic said that I still had aesthetic tendencies," Li says, lighting another of the innumerable Marlboros that she smokes. "The way it works is that you're either inside or outside the French Ministry of Culture circuit. We're outside, and the insiders oppose us. It's been hard, but now we're discovering how to continue, and I'm not even sure I want the subsidy. . . . At least we're free."

"I could tell you were French by your scarf!"

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THE following afternoon, I am in a bar on the Rue des Martyrs with Blanca and Lola. The household has decided to throw an impromptu dinner party at the flat, as it often does, and some twenty guests have been invited. In consequence, Lola has in a shopping cart, among other bits and pieces, a ten-pound salmon. A decision, however, has to be made about the wine. Susy has been asked to the dinner, and Susy—who was formerly Paris's most celebrated call girl and is now, at sixty, a prominent demimondaine hostess—has been known to cut up rough if the wine is not to her liking. In the bar, we are greeted by a willowy young man with shaped eyebrows and a demeanor of ironic refinement. This is El Chocha, a local night *créature.*

"*Chocha,* you see, means 'cunt.' A fully developed, professional cunt," Lola explains.

"And *chochonees,*" Blanca adds, "as in 'Blanca and the Xoxonees,' means 'little pussies.' Worse than 'little pussies,' in fact, but not quite as bad as 'little cunts.' " She throws back her long chestnut hair and shrieks with laughter. This, once again, is the low-life Blanca, the burlesque Blanca, the Blanca of Le Narcisse. The serious Blanca—the Blanca with two de Falla pieces to choreograph, a dance company to bankroll, and an overdraft—has been shucked off with the dancewear in Nanterre.

Back at the flat, she changes into a dramatically asymmetrical black dress by Bertrand Marechal. The dress was a gift from the designer, who recently held a full-scale catwalk show, complete with gilt chairs, film crews, photographers, and members of the press, in Blanca's living room. By eight-thirty, the dinner guests are beginning to arrive. Among the first, in muscle T-shirts and tattoos, are the photographers Pierre et Gilles, whose artful rolling back of the frontiers of kitsch has earned them an international reputation. On a recent New Year's card, they showed a twinkle-eyed sailor shitting on a starlit beach; and Lola, their model on several occasions, is one of the pair's favorite embodiments of femininity. "Blanca, we were thinking about doing a project with you," Gilles says. "Perhaps you could wear a crown of thorns and be crucified?"

"Yes!" says Blanca.

Susy arrives in scarlet—"*Me voici! La première pute du monde*"—and, to Lola's relief, she pronounces the wine excellent. "Some people give you wine that tastes of shit," Susy explains to me. "But then some people"—she places her hands on her hips, vaudeville style—"*love* the taste of shit!" On her retirement from the profession, Susy decided to write a book about her experiences. So far, the book has been seventeen years in the making. "You must take your time," Blanca Li says, affectionately. Blanca, those close to her emphasize, has an exceptional gift for friendship. "I admire her as a choreographer, I admire her as a dancer, but, most of all, I admire her as a person," Sybilla says. "She's warm and strong and real. . . . I love collaborating with her more than anything in the whole world."

The room is suddenly flooded with guests, and Blanca and Etienne busy themselves with the *placement.* The last to arrive is Eric Dahan, the style commentator for the journal *Libération.* Dahan is an institution, and his presence indicates that this is quite simply the only possible place to be. Tonight, as it happens, Dahan will not last the course. Sleep will overtake him before the remains of Lola's salmon have been carried from the table, and he will almost certainly miss the moment when, shortly before midnight, Blanca Li begins to dance. ♦

ANNALS OF MONEY

LOVING THE MARK

For almost fifty years, it's been the symbol of the good Germany. Can the Euro take its place?

BY AMITY SHLAES

IN the spring of 1948, more than thirty months after V-E Day, the inhabitants of occupied Germany surveyed their bomb-scarred homeland and found scant sign of recovery. Hershey's bars, Lucky Strikes, and lumps of coal had long since supplanted the almost worthless Reichsmark as the medium of exchange. Many citizens still lived in the cellars of roofless buildings and subsisted on rations that included as few as four eggs a year. Lübeck, a gabled Hanseatic port once so prosperous that Thomas Mann had made it the setting for his silk-gloved Buddenbrooks, now reported that its citizens lacked most basic provisions. "Many mothers must wrap their infants in newspapers," a municipal health official wrote, "because they have no diapers."

What troubled the Germans most was not the empty warehouses or the moribund factories but their sense that the circumstances were permanent. German historians Hans Roeper and Wolfram Weimer cite a 1948 survey published in the American zone: "On the basis of current production levels in the Western zones, every inhabitant, with the exception of miners and other priority groups, can expect the following: each year, 343 grams in textiles. Every two years, a water glass. Every four years, a pair of leather shoes and a canning jar. Every seven years, a piece of porcelain. Every fifteen years, a cooking spoon. Every 150 years a washbasin, and in all eternity, no toothbrush and no shaving brush." The three Western zones of occupation—American, British, and French—and the Soviet zone in the East all seemed stuck at what Germany's young poets, some returning from stints as P.O.W.s, called "*die Stunde Null*"—"zero hour."

Yet the German clock did come unstuck, and the recovery did begin, at a moment that most citizens can point to precisely: Sunday, June 20, 1948—Day X, as the Germans called it—the day of the new currency reform. The reform, which the Western Allies and their German adviser, a box-headed economics professor named Ludwig Erhard, announced over the radio, technically involved a simple trade of pieces of paper: the Germans were to exchange their old Reichsmark for a new money, dubbed the Deutsche mark. Erhard, whom the American occupiers had promoted as the director of the economic council for the British and American zones, cautioned his listeners not to expect miracles. Nevertheless, items that had been almost impossible to obtain for years—cauliflower and eggs, stoves and bicycles—appeared in shopwindows once more. To Germans, Day X *was* a miracle, and it laid the groundwork for West Germany's multi-decade Economic Miracle. The priest of that movement was Erhard himself, and its symbol was the new coin: their German mark.

NEXT year, Germany will celebrate the mark's fiftieth birthday, and it plans to do so with a ceremonial enthusiasm befitting the birthday of a national saint or liberator: publishing houses, museum curators, and banks are all planning to devote the month of June to honoring the occasion. Yet six months after this jubilee, on January 1, 1999, Germany plans to kill off the mark and lead Europe in adopting the new Continental currency, the Euro.

Pushing Germany toward this perplexing act of national sacrifice is its Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, who has solemnly asserted that "the policy of European unification is, in reality, a question of war and peace in the twenty-first century." Kohl believes that the only safe Germany is one that can be locked—along with its money—into the constraining framework of a greater Europe.

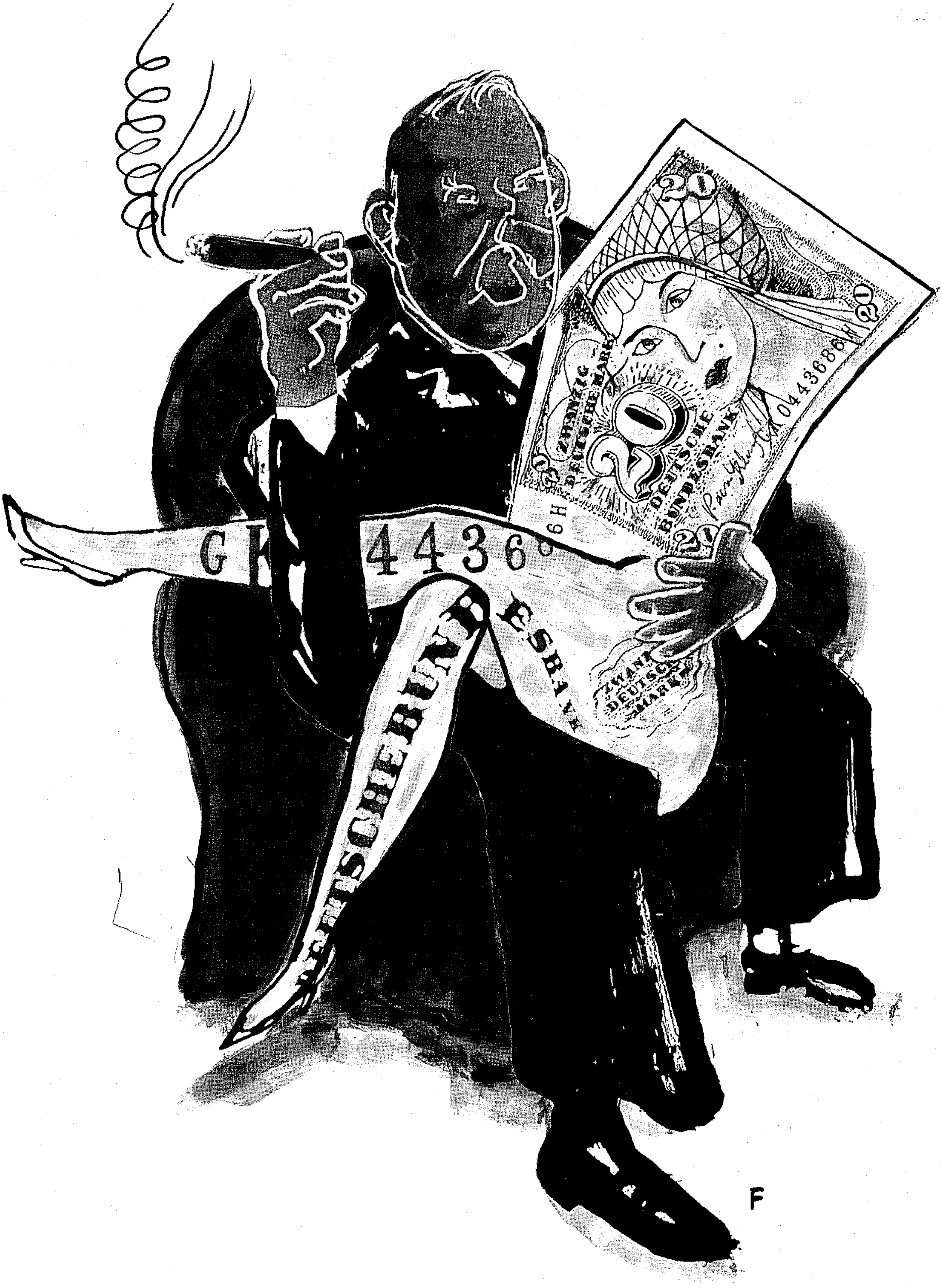
For Kohl, a practicing Catholic who operates with one eye to judgment day, the fear of continental division and, ultimately, war is genuine. He first rose to power, in the early eighties, through his mastery of parliamentary tactics, not through any inspired vision of twenty-first-century Europe. Once he was in office, his largest ambition was to demonstrate Bonn's loyalty to NATO by prevailing over Germany's bumptious peace movement and lining the Fulda Gap with medium-range nuclear missiles. When Kohl did pull off something truly historic—reunification—he was spooked by his own success. Now the prospect of *Reich* loomed, where before there had been only the tame Federal Republic. If offering up the mark will banish that prospect, he is willing to pay the price.

In addition, he and his fellow-statesmen are alarmed by the mass unemployment currently overwhelming the Continent. They hope that by melding their moneys they can forge a trading bloc formidable enough to compete with North America. They have taken as a motto an observation made thirty-five years ago by the French economist Jacques Rueff: "*L'Europe se fera par la monnaie ou ne se fera pas*"—"Europe will be made by its money or not at all."

Not surprisingly, many Europeans have remained unswayed by this obscure rallying cry. From Danish grandmothers to French sociologists, voters are greeting the prospect of the currency conversion with considerable skepticism, and some of the more vigilant activists in Europe's anti-Euro movement can be found in Kohl's own country. These opponents treasure the stable mark above anything that a vague and bureaucratic European state might be able to offer. They, too, fear the reappearance of German militarism, but they believe that such a reappearance is more likely *without* the mark. For them, the mark is an indispensable talisman of the "good" Germany. One outraged German citizen described Maastricht, the 1991 meeting in Holland at which European leaders set the terms of monetary union, as "a Versailles Treaty without a war."

Germans speak about the mark in startlingly intimate, anthropomorphic terms: "MURDER OF THE DM," ran a typical headline in the letters column of the national *Die Woche*. Even Hans Tietmeyer, the unflappable president of Germany's Bundesbank, becomes emotional

FILIP PAGOWSKI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The Deutsche mark: a currency embraced by the nation since Ludwig Erhard announced its introduction in 1948.

"I come to hype Caesar, not to bury him."

• •

when he attempts to describe the mark's significance: "The German people have a broken—an interrupted—relationship with their own history," he explains. "They can't parade like others. They can't salute their flag with the same enthusiasm as others. Their only safe symbol is the mark."

This past winter, as German unemployment hit 12.2 per cent, the defenders of the mark grew more insistent. The weekly news magazine *Focus* reported that more than half of the country rejected monetary union; three out of four Germans wanted a popular referendum on whether the mark should become the Euro in 1999. Germany was facing its worst economic crisis in forty-five years. Wasn't this the wrong moment, loyalists argued, to surrender the very object that had brought Germany forward?

GERMANS will tell you that the roots of their love affair with today's mark are buried deep in their history—before Erhard, before 1948, even before Hitler—in the time of Kaiser Wilhelm II. The Kaiser created the first currency crisis when he paid for his Great War by borrowing and then inflating. The Weimar Republic then compounded his folly, printing more Reichsmarks to shoulder the enormous debt ordained by Versailles. In 1923, the year the French occupied the Ruhr, a thousand seven hundred and eighty-three German presses ran day and night churning out bills that ended up literally not being worth the paper they were printed on. For the already shaky young republic, the result was a new form of economic disorientation. The Reichsmark moved from just over four to the dollar in July, 1914, to four trillion two hundred thousand to the dollar in November, 1923.

Hyperinflation is the economic term for such unfathomable decreases in the value of a currency. Little in the lexicon of American experience—not "inflation," not "recession," not even "depression"—suggests the magnitude of a hyperinflation disaster. Malcolm Cowley, who travelled in Europe in the nineteen-twenties, captured the small man's sense of vertigo in the following anecdote: "Once in Berlin a man was about to pay ten marks for a box of matches when he stopped to look at the banknote in his hand. On it was written, 'For these ten marks I sold my virtue.' He wrote a long virtuous story about it, was paid ten million marks, and bought his mistress a pair of artificial silk stockings."

Weimar's hyperinflation passed, but it fostered an extreme insecurity that would soon be exploited by Hitler. Pearl S. Buck recorded a German noblewoman's characterization of Hitler's monetary opportunism:

> Hitler . . . said that the Treaty of Versailles was but "a piece of paper." Well, those words that were so shocking to the whole world were not so shocking for those millions who had seen their money, their savings, their contracts become but pieces of paper. And Hitler knew with his instinct for the emotional reactions that his words would remind the people of what had happened to them during inflation and would fill them with rage.

Of course, the Führer himself did not long refrain from paying for his war by printing his own paper—a move that was a particularly bitter betrayal for those who believed that National Socialism would prevent the kind of indiscipline that had led to the hyperinflation of 1923.

AS it happened, it was an occupier, not a German, who precipitated the *Aufschwung*—the long-prayed-for postwar economic recovery. Through 1947 and early 1948, General Lucius Clay, the commander of the United States forces in Europe, implemented the currency-reform effort. The project was so enormous that an onlooker termed it "the greatest logistical accomplishment of the American Army since the invasion of Normandy." That winter, the historians Dennis Bark and David Gress report, five hundred tons of a new currency, decorated with American-style curlicues, were printed in the United States and delivered to the Western zones in wooden crates as part of Operation Bird Dog. The Reform was like a giant sponge that absorbed the Reichsmark flood. It required Germans to trade their old money in for new marks at a ten-to-one rate, reducing the supply of money by more than ninety per cent. In addition, citizens received sixty marks each to begin their new lives. It wasn't much, but many kept their jobs, and were paid in the new currency.

It is Ludwig Erhard, however, not Lucius Clay, whom the Germans invariably invoke when speaking of their economic miracle. Erhard, a First World War veteran and an astute practical economist, had sat out the first years of the war at a Nuremberg market-research institute, where his sense of humor had alienated the earnest Nazis as much as his steadfast unwillingness to join them. (Once, when Erhard entered a crowded room where an eagle, the symbol of Prussian might, graced the wall, he commented, "Aha. There hangs our buzzard of bankruptcy.") But in 1943 a group of German industrialists quietly asked Erhard to draw up a plan to salvage the economy in the increasingly likely event of Hitler's defeat. After the war, Erhard's work came to Clay's attention, and the Allies plucked him, along with the man who was to become West Germany's first Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, from a list of "clean" Germans. It was in part the passionate—and highly public—involvement of Erhard that enabled his fellow-citizens to embrace the reform as their own.

And it was Erhard who made the economic miracle stick. In the same week that the authorities gave Germany the new Deutsche mark, economics director Erhard startled occupiers by easing the rationing of all but the most basic goods and announcing that an end to long-standing price and wage controls would follow. Germans still proudly recount an exchange between Clay and Erhard: "Professor Erhard, you altered my regulations!" Clay exclaimed. "No, Herr General," Erhard replied. "I didn't alter them. I got rid of them!" At first, prices rose, and so did joblessness. But with the global economic upswing that attended the outbreak of the Korean War the West German economy took off. Many outsiders later simplistically ascribed this change entirely to the Marshall Plan. But the import of Erhard and his mark was instantly understood by Joseph Stalin, who responded to the new currency within days by blockading Berlin. He recognized that the reform locked the Western zones into the United States-dominated world of the dollar. Free of wage and price controls, the Western zones could expand. The Russian zone—and the Soviet empire behind it—would have to confront the long challenge of keeping up.

As soon as West Germans could vote as a state, they made Erhard their first economics minister. Through the fifties, Erhard, chomping on the cigars that were his trademark, presided over an economy that grew at the rates we now associate with Pacific-rim "emerging markets." West Germany was still something of a world pariah, but as an exporter, at least, it could gain international respect. Indeed, one of the first ways that Germans used their new mark was to offer signs of contrition for their murder of the Jews. In 1952, the mark was already solid enough to generate significant national wealth. That wealth enabled Adenauer to sign a commitment giving the struggling state of Israel three billion marks—seven hundred and fifteen million dollars—mostly in capital goods.

By the late nineteen-fifties, the currency was strong enough to achieve full "convertibility," which meant that, for the first time in decades, West Germans could travel abroad with ease. "We weren't treated like second-class citizens anymore," Manfred Körber, the press spokesman for the Bundesbank's powerful directorate, recalls. This pleasure became even keener when the West Germans considered that it was not available to their counterparts trapped in East Germany.

On Erhard's sixtieth birthday, in 1957, citizens lined up for ten hours outside the gloomy Economics Ministry to wish him well. Stores carried a cigar named the Professor Erhard. Erhard himself was meanwhile doing what he could to codify the stability of the new money. That same year, he helped push through the law that charged Germany's central bank with "the aim of safeguarding the currency," making the Bundesbank the official keeper of the mark. (Although today's Euro politicians rarely mention it, Erhard also took a position in early discussions of a Euro-

"Now, that's the kind of innovative thinking I'd like to see around our shop."

pean union: he was a skeptic, out of fear of an "institutional" superstate.)

It may seem odd that Germans, a people much attached to their social-welfare net, would lionize Ludwig Erhard, whose most important work was animated by radical laissez-faire theory. Yet Erhard was the legitimate father of what he and Germans called their "social market economy." Strong growth, budgetary surpluses, and private-sector profits resulting from the stable mark and the free economy generated enormous prosperity. This prosperity enabled Germany to fund its cradle-to-grave arrangement, which, in turn, yielded more of the much prized stability.

In 1966, after serving a rocky three years as chancellor, Erhard retired from public life. The mark, however, only increased in strength and popularity. My own first encounter with the average *Bürger's* feelings about his money came some twenty years ago, when, on an exchange program, I was billeted at a Westphalian pig farm. Although I, a sixteen-year-old from America's Midwest, had scarcely noticed it, that year the dollar was hitting new lows against the seemingly indomitable mark. One day the fittingly porcine father of the house pulled me off to a corner of the kitchen for an exchange-rate chat. "*Der Dollar ist krank*," he said gleefully, giving me my first demonstration of the meaning of the term "Schadenfreude." "So, what do you think of that?"

East Germans, trapped for many years with a pretend money in a pretend economy, were especially envious of Westerners and their mark. In the heady days after the Wall fell, their first stop in the West was the bank: to collect their hundred Deutsche marks (fifty-five dollars) of "welcome money" from Bonn. In 1990, the mark achieved its greatest political feat, luring East Germans into reunification: Helmut Kohl had bet correctly that he could win East Germans' support by dangling the mark before them. Yet Kohl's policies did much to preclude an economic miracle in the East. First, Bonn gave East Germans their "hard money" at an overly generous one-to-one rate. More important, it did not follow the other parts of the Erhard formula necessary to create the kind of truly free market that would allow the Eastern economy to grow.

WHAT REVOLUTIONS

We are not as quick as you
to assign things names—
sometimes just the month will do.
A quiet August day, 1968,
a bit autumnal—later,
we did not call it an Invasion,
though it was, of bewildered boys
our own age in cumbersome tanks,
so well directed they mistook
a fossil-filled museum
for the Radio
and fired their guns
into its façade. Still they won.
We met around that time, Pavel and I,
in the pub, eager to escape
the idealism of our parents,
married shortly afterward
so we could get a flat,
started a family.
Why didn't you fight, our children asked.
One of our friends, perhaps a fighter,
several months after August
set himself on fire. We all, or so
it seemed, the whole world, screamed.
Very few knew, may have forgotten,
a short time later
another student immolated himself,
but the police blocked off the street

Now the German government is wagering that voters will forget the errors of 1990 and succumb to the charms of another monetary project—the Euro. In the five and a half years since the European states set the criteria for monetary union in Maastricht, Chancellor Kohl and his colleagues have taken great care in making their case. They begin with an explication of the advantages of a common currency, reminding Germans that under a European currency German business would be able to deliver two-thirds of its exports without the risks of exchange fluctuations. Then they note that a strict enforcement of Maastricht's requirements should insure a "German" soundness for the new currency. (The treaty, strictly interpreted, says that to take part in the monetary union countries must first get their government debt below sixty per cent of the gross domestic product, get their annual deficits below three per cent of the gross domestic product, and show that their inflation is in check.) Over and over again comes the promise: the new currency shall be as stable as—as "hard" as—the mark. "The Germans love the mark more than their wives—or husbands," says Wolfgang Roth, a vice-president of the European Investment Bank, but he adds, "They overlook that their love affair was possible because it flowered within the garden of an integrated Europe."

The average voter's aversion to the Euro is buttressed by professional Euro skeptics. First come the labor advocates, who worry that the economy will suffer under a hard Euro regime. Their concerns are shared by numerous economists and businesses. They argue that a strong mark has already done enough damage to German competitiveness in the nineteen-nineties—that Germany's current crisis would not be so acute were it not for the fact that exchange rates had helped to make German labor unnecessarily expensive. A strong Euro with attendant high interest rates, they assert, will only prolong the problem.

Then there are the defenders of the mark, who fear that any change will lead to a money—mark or Euro—that is too "soft." These include politicians of varying backgrounds, as well as Tietmeyer and other hard-money cardinals at the Bun-

and the papers made him
neither martyr nor psychopath—
he lived three days, someone told me
who had a friend at the burn ward.
My sister had loved him,
was taken in for questioning.
It was a plot to weaken the brotherhood.
The motherland. I'm sure you cannot understand.
It doesn't matter. Life went on as it had—
people don't stop raising children,
or feeling jealous, or laying blame
because men and dogs patrol the border—
and our daughters, who called us cowards,
were surprised, and sobered,
when I insisted I would accompany them
to the demonstrations a generation later,
because I was afraid for their lives,
afraid my own had meant so little to them.
But we do not use the word, though it's a nice one,
Revolution, Velvet or Otherwise,
whatever your journalists say,
telling the world a tale that is not ours—
we refer to it as the Changes,
or just November, when,
I remember, our phone was out,
as it often still is,
and my father was dying in our cottage,
and Pavel was there with him,
fixing the floor after all those years.

—REVAN SCHENDLER

desbank. Even as they have paid lip service to the Chancellor's Euro project, these central bankers have reminded voters of the numerous constituencies who would suffer under a more inflated money—small savers and workers who would find that their wages could buy less.

Their reluctance to give up the mark is ascribable in part to institutional *tristesse*. With monetary union, the Bundesbank is due to lose much of its reason for being, and its sinecured staffers will have to surrender offices, privileges, and, in some cases, jobs. Yet their stance is based on faith, as surely as Kohl's is. For their part, they fear a future in which the currency managers give in to temptation and try to end unemployment by manipulating money.

Outside Germany, the tensions of the Euro have been different. Countries like Greece and Italy, which may have trouble passing the Maastricht tests, see a new kind of German arrogance—one that seeks not to envelop but to exclude them. Other governments—like that of France—hope that monetary union will help them cure their chronic unemployment by giving them little economic miracles of their own. But a strong new currency will not, by itself, make an Erhardian miracle—in Germany or anywhere else. You also need an Erhardian free market on a European scale. Most European leaders prefer to focus on the money, however: cerebral summiteering over interest rates is more pleasant than staying home creating jobs, or making unpopular cutbacks in entitlements. "Monetary union is actually a distraction," says Lawrence Lindsey, who as a member of the Federal Reserve's Board of Governors sat through many of this decade's Euro wrangles. "The great fear is that when E.M.U. comes to pass, and nothing gets better, what will the people of Europe then turn to for hope?"

Lindsey's "distraction" argument also applies, increasingly, to Germany. Sustained and spreading unemployment, widening budget deficits, the flight of firms and of capital—these are budgetary and social troubles, not currency ones. With a deficit currently exceeding three per cent, even model Germany is violating the Maastricht criteria. If he is to keep to his Euro schedule Kohl will have to support a European currency that is more flexible—i.e., less valuable—than the current mark. But in 1998 Germany faces national elections, and a decision on Kohl's part to weaken the Euro, or even the mark, might put his Chancellorship at risk.

The question tormenting Germany, though, goes deeper than electoral politics. Germans, who are facing unemployment figures as high as those of 1933, now murmur "Weimar conditions"—a reference to the moment when joblessness drove Germany into Hitler's arms. Instead of taking up this painful subject, Germans prefer to submerge themselves in studies of their old, treasured principles and symbols. The nation is working itself into a nostalgic frenzy as it plans the mark's birthday cum retirement party next summer. In the meantime, the Germans have been busy commemorating the hundredth anniversary of Ludwig Erhard's birth, in Franconian Fürth. Politicians of all backgrounds are hastening to appropriate Erhard for their own purposes. The Kohl government gamely sought to lay claim to the Erhard name by giving its own Erhard party, at a Rhine-side hotel, on January 29th—six days before the actual anniversary. Some two thousand guests watched a video about the professor's life and received a kit of Erhardiana, which included an Erhard telephone card and a two-mark Erhard coin. This was also to be an event at which Kohl would try to define his own place in history, moving to stand beside Erhard in the still modest pantheon of worthy German leaders. Kohl introduced the program, and had prepared a policy statement to read before the playing of the national anthem. The German press reported that Kohl would use the moment to exhort Germans to confront their current troubles by proceeding with Erhard's "pugnacious optimism." But then, when his turn came to speak, the challenge apparently overwhelmed him. Rather than stake his claim as Erhard's son or the mark's protector, Europe's senior statesman simply thanked the previous speaker, let the orchestra launch directly into the "Deutschlandlied," and fell silent. ♦

A REPORTER AT LARGE

BLACK LONDON

After three generations, being black has finally become a way of being British.

BY HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR.

ABOUT twenty-five years ago, I took a job at the London bureau of *Time*. New in town, I had set out on foot from Bayswater Road for the Time-Life Building, on New Bond Street. Soon I was desperately lost and desperately trying not to show my desperation. It was that time of the morning when the only people around were those who actually worked on the street, and they all seemed to speak an alien tongue. This was my first time in England, where I was to live for the next few years, but I might as well have been in Vladivostok: I couldn't understand a word anyone was saying. Then I saw a black face and, out of habit, eagerly approached: at last, in this strange land, a *brother*. The man was cleaning the sidewalk outside a men's clothier's, dousing the concrete with soapy water and sweeping it over the curb. I gave him a prayerful look: Could he possibly tell me how to find New Bond Street? The man stared at me quizzically, and when he opened his mouth he sounded exactly like every other workman I'd encountered.

I was dumbstruck; it was as if the voice were the work of an unseen ventriloquist. Though I must have known better, I had, on some level, always assumed that my black compatriots *sounded* black because they *were* black: I'd assumed (I cringe to relate now) that the shape of our African lips had something to do with our characteristic consonants and vowels. Black comedians like Godfrey Cambridge could "do" a white voice—they delighted in it—but you didn't think they could really keep it up for very long. I spent the next weeks studying first-generation English blacks as they spoke, mesmerized by the sight of protuberant lips forming sounds—whether plummily R.P. or blurry and filled with glottal stops—that were indistinguishable from those of their white counterparts. It took a while for the novelty to wear off. My initial travels through black London, then, were for me a succession of spit-takes: black people who sounded English without even trying.

What bliss it was to be black and living in London! How free you felt from the mundane prejudices of race-obsessed America! Here was a country where the boundaries between the races had been erased. Or so, for a time, I could imagine. I eagerly sought out London's island immigrants: the Trinidadians in Ladbroke Grove; the Barbadians in Finsbury Park, Notting Hill Gate, and Shepherd's Bush; and the Jamaicans (who then made up—as they continue to do—more than two-thirds of the West Indian population) concentrated in Brixton. As I soon learned, the history of Britain's West Indians—as a substantial presence, rather than the occasional anomaly—went back only to 1948, when a boatload of nearly five hundred Jamaicans docked at Liverpool. Postwar England had a pressing need for manual labor, and the West Indians provided a convenient source. There had, of course, been people of African descent in England for centuries; the National Portrait Gallery currently has an exhibition devoted to Ignatius Sancho, who corresponded with Sterne and was painted by Gainsborough; and, long before Enoch Powell, Queen Elizabeth I demanded that all the blacks in England pick up and leave. But this was the first time they had established themselves as a collective presence, in numbers that grew to two hundred thousand within a decade and a half. Black London—and it was in London that the great majority of them pooled—was born. The Jamaican poet Louise Bennett called the process "colonization in reverse."

The presence of the black *Gastarbeiter* inevitably caused a certain unease among the natives. You wanted to be good hosts, of course, but you were hard pressed to know what to do when the guests forgot that they *were* guests. And that was the trouble with those postwar West Indians. You'd welcomed them into your home (*so* nice they could stop by), but now the hour was getting late. And, though you'd turned up the lights, noisily switched on the Hoover, even asked if you could call them a cab—done everything you politely could—they still didn't get the message: *You can all go home now*. That's when the sense of panic began to rise.

The blacks arrived at a time of "overemployment," but, as the sixties wore on, overemployment turned to underemployment, and a new and newly disaffected generation found itself out of luck and out of place. If many of them had no jobs, though, they did have their folkways; and in the contest of cultures bangers-and-mash was no match for curry goat. That sense of cultural difference was itself the cause of further unease. Britain had always had its own internal ethnic clashes, but they were familiar and, for the most part, unthreatening, the stuff of music-hall caricatures—"When Ah take a couple o' drinks on a Sa'day night, Glasgow belongs tae me!"

Gradually, my enthusiasm for the Afro-Saxon diaspora soured into frustration at its marginality and powerlessness. I'd arrived from a land where James Brown and Jimi Hendrix—and Miles Davis and John Coltrane—ruled; where an entire generation, so it seemed, had with pen and brush taken up the task of self-representation. In London, the only cultural vitality appeared to come from forms that were borrowed, essentially unmodified, from the Caribbean. I would visit London's leading black bookstore, the New Beacon, and find that nearly everything on the shelves was

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A culture that is distinctively black and British can be said to be in full flower. Photograph by Rotimi Fani-Kayode.

from the West Indies or America. "How can they be English?" John La Rose, the poet and publisher who ran the store, used to say to me about his fellow-expatriates. "Their entire culture is West Indian."

On Saturdays, the younger generation of Britain's recent immigrants would gather at some vacant house that had recently been "liberated" for the occasion, the electricity and gas reconnected for an evening's bacchanalia. It was called "goin' blues," and although the site changed from week to week, you rarely had to ask where it was being held: you could hear it half a block away, as the reggae thudded through the adjoining council housing. You paid your twenty pence at the door and entered into sweltering, Caribbean heat. The floors trembled from the enormous bass loudspeakers. Upstairs, people queued for hot food and for Johnnie Walker served in Coke cans. Everybody was smoking ganja; you could get high just from breathing. But what always struck me was how joyless it all seemed: nobody spoke or even laughed. Expressions were hard, affectless. The only white man I ever saw at a blues party was the one who distributed cocaine and ganja. "Him not white," an acquaintance told me. "Him da *pusher* mon, dat all." Otherwise, the only words you'd hear spoken all night were in the imperative mood: "Pass da ganja" and (if you accidentally brushed by someone in the crowded room) "Don't touch me, mon." Not jubilation but escape was the order of the night. And their language itself was another means of escape. "Da rotted kayan" were the police; "da monkeys" or "da natives" were the English; "Babylon," with a pleasing semantic symmetry, could refer either to England or to Jamaica. There was even a peculiar nomenclature for cognition: a Jamaican friend used to tell me, "Da monkey understands. But da black mon overstands." The one thing they could all overstand was that, no matter how many drinks on a Saturday night, London did not belong to them.

TWENTY-FIVE years later, a culture that is distinctively black *and* British can be said to be in full flower, both on the streets and in the galleries. "What we had before was the Afro-Caribbean presence in Britain," says Stuart Hall, a professor of sociology at the Open University, who is, among other things, black Britain's leading theorist of black Britain. "But the emergence of a black British culture can now be seen. For the first time, being black is a way of being British."

This development is partly a reflection of social engineering: in the aftermath of the riots that swept Brixton and other black neighborhoods in 1981, employment measures like Section 11 were adopted, accelerating the placement of blacks in public-sector jobs and helping to create something of a black middle class, however tiny. It's partly a reflection of the entrepreneurial ethos of Thatcherism itself. And it's partly a reflection of the liminal status of a new generation that was always looking both ahead and behind. "You know that if you go into a smart boutique on Oxford Street," Hall says, "one of the things you will find is a very smart, good-looking black woman. Blacks become objects of desire in curious ways, with some secret umbilical connection to what's cool or exotic or sexy, or to the body or to music—all the things that Puritan English culture both reviled and desired. They've turned marginality into a very creative art form—life form, really—and they've done so at the level of youth culture, of music, of dress. They've *styled* their way into British culture. Which isn't hard, of course—it's one of the most unstylish places in the world."

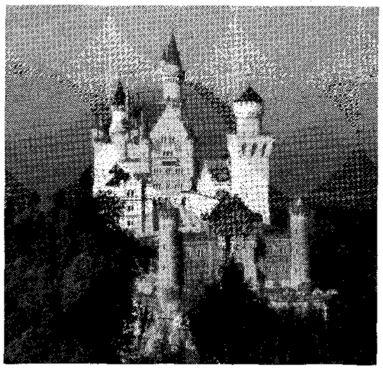
Among those who have styled their way into British culture is Ozwald Boateng, the first black tailor, he says, to hang out his own shingle on Savile Row, and, at thirty, the youngest. His parents came from the Ashanti region of Ghana, and he has a West African's dark-chocolate skin, though at six feet three he's tall for a Ghanaian. More than Boateng's blackness, his brashness makes him an anomaly on the street: Slick Rick meets Paul Stuart. Even the shop's décor—the mustard-yellow walls, the purple carpet, the cerise velvet that drapes the freestanding dressing room—seems a deliberate affront to the staid establishments that surround it. But what makes him so subversive, sartorially speaking, is his conservatism. "Balance" is Boateng's rallying cry as a maker of men's suits, and I'm impressed, too, by his ability to strike a balance between bland assimilation and strident racial self-assertion. He tells me that he's "a big believer in being Ashanti," but he also declares, "I love the whole pompous cast of English tradition." He recounts an annual occasion when the tailors from Savile Row have a formal, sit-down dinner. "And all the Lords, and everyone—it's a men's club. Really a staunch British organization. And every so often there would be a toast to the Queen, so you'd stand up: 'The Queen, the Queen!' It's like totally fantastic." You sense in Boateng a deliciously camp devotion to the ways of little England: he finds them—well, fetching. And how, I inquire, did he dress at this congregation of the sartorial centurions, the last guardians of tradition? Did he wear gray flannel? Boateng appears to be aghast at the possibility. "Actually," he says, squaring his shoulders, "I wore a black velvet suit with a *slight* glitter in it."

To see what's new here, it helps to talk to someone who has succeeded under the terms of the older covenant, and can remind you that in the more rarefied circles of London society you're still unlikely to encounter a black face. The dress designer Bruce Oldfield, whose clients include the Princess of Wales, was adopted as a child by a white woman who lived in rural England. "I don't think I really saw black people en masse until I was about twenty-one, when I came to London and lived in Brixton," he says. At any rate, the visible signs of Oldfield's Jamaican heritage are pretty discreet. "I have a great rapport with Arabs, because they think *I'm* an Arab," he tells me, with a low, mischievous chuckle. "Which is handy, because they've got a lot of money, and they like buying flashy frocks." These days, Oldfield has left Brixton far behind, and the London he inhabits is essentially color-free. "I mean, if I go into a trendy restaurant, like the Caprice or the Ivy, I don't see many black people," he says. "I just don't see black people where I go. I'm rarely in a house where there's another black person, socially." He speaks of all this matter-of-factly, and yet it's clear that he sees himself, finally, as an interloper in the circles he moves through. "English society is very compartmentalized," he says. "There are black people who cross over, obviously—there'll be an interior decorator, a designer, people like me." Yet there's all the difference in the world between thinking that you belong and thinking that you've crossed over. Oldfield doesn't quite manage a smile when he tells me, "I cross over because I'm amusing and witty and charming."

Opposite page, from top: Tony Blair confidant Trevor Phillips, Voice editor Annie Stewart, Lord Taylor of Warwick, Professor Stuart Hall. This page: Designer Bruce Oldfield, Arena editor Ekow Eshun, theatre director Yvonne Brewster, Savile Row's Ozwald Boateng. Photographs by Jillian Edelstein.

As you'd expect, a lot of the recent cultural ferment associated with black London happens much closer to street level. You feel that energy when you page through some of the black newspapers, like the weekly *Voice* (which claims to have two hundred thousand readers) and the more bourgie *New Nation* (which has been publishing only since November and hopes to reach thirty thousand). And you feel it even in the crudely satiric *Skank*, which is produced by and addressed to younger blacks. *Skank* has a less than reverential attitude toward black celebrities (devoting an entire page to the splayed nostrils of the Birmingham-based black boxer Chris Eubank, which it likens to King Kong's); and it spoofs such historic episodes of black resistance as the 1981 Brixton riots, by offering "the Brixton Riots '95 role playing game." ("Feel the tension as you try to light that petrol bomb! Feel your pulse race as you try to find a hiding place for that brand new 48 inch Dolby stereo, laser colour TV and video you happily found lying in Dixons!") Then, there was a scabrous cartoon sequence entitled "Lunch Box Christie," which focussed on the runner Linford Christie's supposedly outsized endowment. (Christie sued the magazine, but only because the cartoon also implied that he took drugs to increase his athletic performance.)

Skank is published by the X Press, which is otherwise exclusively a book-publishing house. The press's founder, Dotun Adebayo, was born in Nigeria and came to the U.K. when he was six; his father taught physics at the University of London, though he has since retired and returned to Nigeria. The Adebayos are a textbook story of upward mobility: during one period, Dr. Adebayo had five children at university in England at the same time. Dotun Adebayo himself studied philosophy at the University of Essex; his brother Diran, a successful novelist, attended Oxford. Dotun Adebayo, like others of his generation, has a strong sense of mission—the familiar first-generation drive to fulfill the longings of the immigrant parents. "I drive a very old car, but it happens to be a Jaguar," he told me. "The reason I have it is my father, and his dream. He always wanted a Jaguar XJ-6. My fa-



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ther came back over to this country recently, and I didn't even tell him I had this car, I just told him I'd pick him up. He was so proud. He said, 'Ah, Dotun. When I lived in England, I always wanted this car.' It didn't matter that he'd spent thirty years here without achieving what he wanted to achieve—he had actually achieved it for the next generation. So that the onus is now on us to do something."

Adebayo's first big score as a book publisher was Victor Headley's "Yardie"—pulp fiction about Jamaican gangster life. "Basically, we postered the whole of Brixton," he recalls. "You woke up one morning and everywhere you looked in Brixton it said 'Yardie.' Within a few weeks, we'd sold thousands and thousands of copies." The X Press has now published fifty-one titles, most by black British authors, and most delightfully lurid and action-packed. (The titles include "Rude Gal," "Curvy Lovebox," and "The Ragga and the Royal.") The success of these books shows that there is a black reading public—though Adebayo would argue that black London is something that is in the process of being created. "You need to go outside London and see the other inner cities, and then you will realize there is a black London," he told me. "The black people in Manchester are Mancunians first, black people second. There's no link point over there. In the circles I move in—and I move in circles from ragamuffin kids to intellectuals, or what have you—there is definitely an urge to create a black London."

In the main, the black London that existed in the sixties and seventies was bound by what Stuart Hall calls a "transistor culture"—by certain kinds of music and the radio stations that played them. Though blacks in Britain have always been known for the music they brought with them from the islands (like ska and reggae and its rougher offspring, ragga), it is only relatively recently that these musical styles have evolved beyond their precursors. Today, the mores of the black British club scene have drifted far from those island moorings.

You can get a sense of just how far at Rampage, a movable feast held one recent Friday at the S.W.1 Club, near Victoria Station. By a quarter past ten, there's already a line of young working-class blacks all the way down the block and around the corner. They queue relatively quietly, chatting in small groups. Inside the small foyer, everyone is halted for a serious security check, scanned by metal detectors and thoroughly patted down by bouncers with headsets. Then they pay their eight pounds cover charge and proceed up a flight of steps and into a large rectangular room. It is furnished sparely, with just a few tables and chairs—nowhere near enough to accommodate a crowd that will grow to a thousand or more by midnight, but by then everybody will be bumping and grinding to Garage and House, hip-hop, Jungle, and even some R. & B. At first, men face each other, dancing, but in postures that are menacing rather than erotic. It's as if they were shadowboxing to the heavy bass beat. Few couples dance together; instead, the genders divide and watch each other, with the men engaged in active display. A man moves in and out of another man's space, mimicking and exaggerating the other's moves. Again, it's pretend sparring; occasionally a shoulder knocks a shoulder.

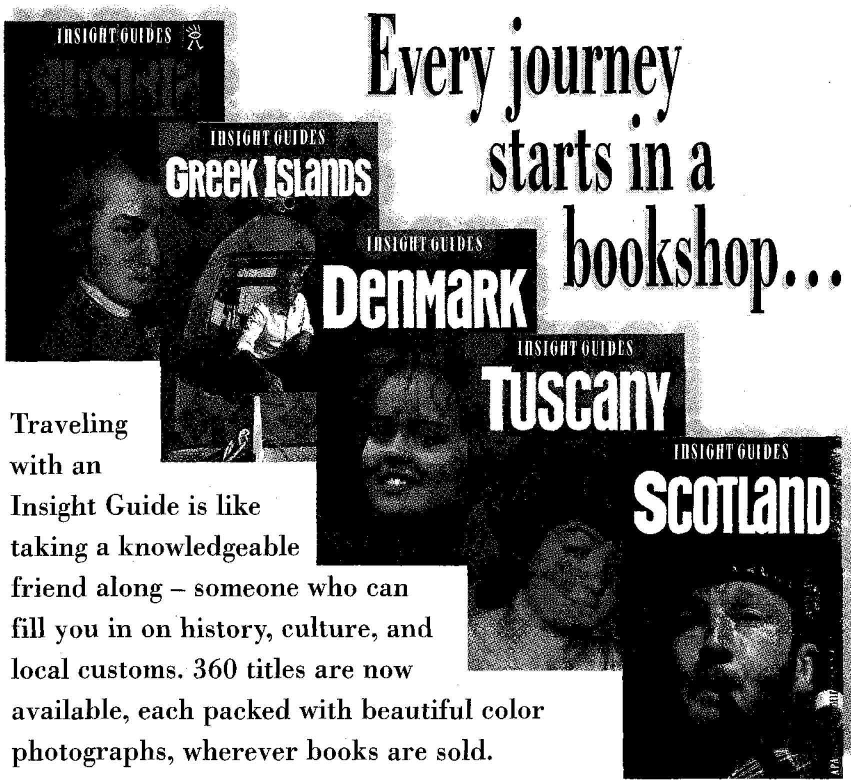
The hair stylist Daniel ("Er, I still use 'Daniel X,' " he says sheepishly, "but my friends tell me it's *such* a cliché") fluently explains the vitality of the popular-music scene to me. "I was really disturbed when I first heard Jungle, because they took some of my favorite reggae tunes and just speeded them up," he says. "The vocals sounded like Mickey Mouse. I was like 'That tune's sacred! How dare you play it at that speed?' They'd double the speed, sample stuff, then put a chant over it, like 'I'll kill your mother.' It took me a little while to come around." Now Daniel speaks of Jungle music with the zeal of a convert. He distinguishes with scholastic precision between Jungle (the drum-and-bass kind of thing that has crossed over, to the point where fifty-year-old David Bowie has a couple of Jungle tracks on his new album) and *Jungle* Jungle, which remains hard-core and all black. But that's not the point. The point is that Daniel himself is about to put out a Jungle track in a couple of months, on his label, Ticking Time Records. Daniel sees a musical world rife with possibility; and should he fail there are multitudes behind him.

In no small measure, black culture simply *is* youth culture in London today. Bizarre as it first seems, speaking with a Jamaican inflection has become hip among working-class white kids. If blacks are only 1.6 per cent of the population, the percentage of wiggers—white wannabes—seems considerably higher. It would be a mistake, though, to come to any hasty conclusions. Imitation and enmity have an uncanny ability to coexist. Paul Gilroy, a leading theorist of black British culture, and a professor at Goldsmiths' College, at the University of London, tells me about white skinheads who beat up blacks and then go home and listen to the rap group Public Enemy. It's as if they can't decide whether they want to bash blacks or be blacks.

And there you have the central contradictions of post-Thatcherite England: the growing cultural prominence of black culture there doesn't mean that racism itself has much abated. The police recently bugged the apartment of the young white thugs suspected of killing a seventeen-year-old black student, Stephen Lawrence, and found them hashing over various ways of killing blacks—even demonstrating the right moves with their kitchen knives. Just last week, a report by the Office for Public Management found that the Royal Navy has "a level of awareness of cultural diversity which is 10 or 20 years behind that of society at large and which can reasonably be said to constitute institutional racism." The same investigation concluded that in the R.A.F. blacks are routinely excluded from honor-guard or V.I.P. details: "An unwritten rule summarised as 'no blacks, Pakis, spots or specs' governed basic assumptions about how things should 'really' or 'normally' be."

Nor are the better-off necessarily better disposed. At a dinner party at a Suffolk manor house, a group of fairly well-to-do Englishmen discuss their hopes and fears for postelection Britain while a fly-on-the-wall documentary-maker named Paul Watson films the group he has convened. The guests—a sales director at a real-estate company, a Lloyds insurance broker, a restaurant owner, and so forth—talk spiritedly about, inter alia, the disagreeableness of blacks. ("I would encourage the black minorities to move back to their country of origin," one says.) Controversy ensues when the documentary is shown on Channel 4, but the participants have few regrets: one of them, a baronet's son named Henry Erskine-Hill, says, "I would think our opinions are representative of the views of a great many people." Erskine-Hill was asked by a newspaper if he was a racist. "It depends what you mean by racism," he sagely replied.

What's clear is that British identity itself remains, as Stuart Hall would say, a contested space. A few years ago, Norman



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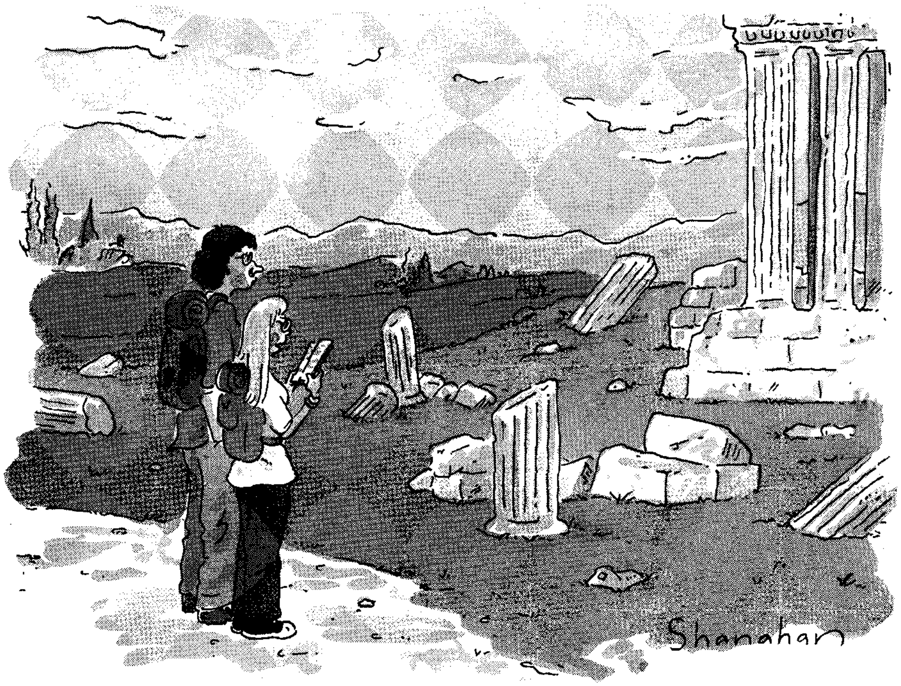
Beresford Tebbit, who was one of Margaret Thatcher's ministers and a onetime chairman of the Tory Party, complained that when Britain's cricket team played one of the West Indian teams "our blacks" tended to root for the wrong side. How could they be truly British if they weren't rooting for the British team? And it's perfectly true that most black Brits fail the so-called Tebbit test; collective allegiances don't always align themselves altogether neatly. In Britain, the challenge is to figure out a vocabulary for addressing the intersections of racial and national identities.

"The trouble is, all of our language on race and race relations has always been borrowed from the United States, and there are reasons why that's wrong," Trevor Phillips, a longtime television broadcaster and producer, complains to me, in crisp Oxford English with just the faintest lilt to it. (He spent his childhood between Guyana and North London.) "Effectively, Caribbean Americans behave in the United States as classical immigrants do and succeed as classical immigrants do—Koreans, say. Here we behave like black Americans in northern cities. Our experience is just the same as that of the blacks who migrated from the South to Chicago—all the way down to welfare dependency, and so forth."

The statistics *are* pretty dire. The unemployment rate among Afro-Caribbeans in Britain is around twenty-five per cent, and in some parts of London it's closer to fifty per cent. The fraction that belongs to the professional class is only two per cent. Despite the fact that Afro-Caribbeans make up only 1.2 per cent of the population, moreover, a recent survey indicated that there may be as many as sixty-one thousand racially motivated assaults against Afro-Caribbeans over the course of a year.

Phillips, a man whose velvety burnt-sienna skin is accented by copper-framed glasses, is the chairman of the Runnymede Trust, and is regarded by many black Brits as a leading cultural broker. As influential as he is at present, he is likely to become more so in the near future. For one thing, he's a friend of Tony Blair's and is said to be in line for a position of some importance. Rumor has him as the chairman of the London Arts Board—or even, once the city's council system of governance is overhauled, as mayor. The possibility of his being raised to a peerage has also been mentioned. Perhaps not surprisingly for such an insider, he doesn't see how separatist ideologies will ever prosper among English blacks. "I think most black people in this country are embarrassed by the idea of being separate," he says. "Our neighbors don't come to lynch us, by and large. And, you know, we go out with their daughters, for Christ's sake." The saving grace of a class-bound society, after all, is that the right class credentials can often override other obstacles.

"The one thing that saves me on the street with the police," Dotun Adebayo tells me, "is they hear my accent and



"They, like, invented retro."

then they think, Hang on, this isn't your typical black bus driver or minicab driver, and take you a bit more seriously. And class is distinguished more by the way you speak than by anything else. In fact, the most tangible racism you'll find here is from the working classes. They're the ones who are going to fight you on the street. Whereas with the middle classes it can be 'Oh, gosh, you went to Oxford as well? Oh, jolly good.' " The novelist Caryl Phillips, who grew up between St. Kitts and England, where he studied at Cambridge, tidily describes the relationship between sociolect and skin color: "In the States, until I open my mouth I look as if I fit in. In Britain, it's only when I open my mouth that I fit in."

That situation can lead to some cultural contortions. Yvonne Brewster, the artistic director of the black theatre company Talawa and a recent O.B.E. ("for services in the arts"), tells me about what she dubs "the raffia ceiling." She says, "Linford Christie will say to you, 'I cannot drive my Porsche.' The man is a millionaire, but he could get arrested for stealing the car. That's why someone like the boxer Chris Eubank dresses up like a kind of antediluvian English toff, with plus fours and a monocle, so he is easily identifiable. You know, there's method to his madness. Even if they stop him with his Mercedes-Benz, they say, 'Ah, it's Chris Eubank—drive on.' In this country, there's absolutely no chance of burning that raffia ceiling. If you put your head above the parapet, you're likely to get it cut off."

For Yvonne Brewster, a member of Jamaica's "mulatto élite," there was never anything abstract about the vagaries of race and class in her new country. "My father had two farms, one in Portland and one in St. Thomas, and there was a man who used to do the horses in St. Thomas," she recalls. "He used to call me Miss Yvonne. Anyway, he came over here as a migrant, because there was no future for him in Jamaica and he didn't have any education. I was over here studying, and I was at Tottenham Court Road underground station and he saw me and came up and hugged and kissed me." That the laborer should have presumed on the solidarity of color and acquaintance horrified her, and, in her vulnerable state, she recoiled. "I suppose what flashed through my mind was that in Jamaica this man wouldn't even come within six feet of me," she says. "Anyway, I never saw the man again." She breaks off, and I notice that there are tears in her eyes.

YET if the barriers of class seem higher in England, those of race seem far more permeable. I'm always struck by the social ease between most blacks and whites on London streets. I was recently near the Brixton market, across the street from the entrance to its open-air section, and two men—tall, coal-black, muscle-bound—came loping toward a small young white woman who was walking by herself in the opposite direction. What happened then was—well, nothing. The needle on the anxiety meter didn't so much as quiver. Throughout the area, blacks and whites seemed comfortable with one another in a way that most American urbanites simply aren't and never have been. "The advantage we have here in England is that you are more likely to be accepted for who you are," one black Londoner tells me. "People don't judge you by who your partner is or who your friends are. I have this white girlfriend who lives in Brixton. We were going shopping in a market, and I met some Lisson Grovers"—the "ruffneck" denizens of a large housing project—"who had never seen me with a white woman. They took it really well. They were like 'Yeah, O.K.' " Annie Stewart, the editor of the *Voice*, says, "I think something like forty per cent of our men have a relationship with a white woman. You find a second generation of blacks here who are more integrated than the first generation."

Some of this sense of belonging is simply a result of racial dispersion. The Labour M.P. Bernie Grant points out, "Even in my area, Tottenham, housing is mixed among the various races—blacks are mixed with whites and Asians and people from Cyprus, and it's all one big cosmopolitan bundle." Americans who imagine Brixton to be analogous to Harlem are always surprised to see how large its white population is. London is where seventy per cent of Britain's blacks reside, but its blackest neighborhoods are almost never more than two-thirds black, and usually they're substantially less.

All this sounds like a good thing, and yet blacks in London often speak enviously of the salience of race in America. "I love going to New York, because I can walk down the street and the place is full of black people," says Ekow Eshun,

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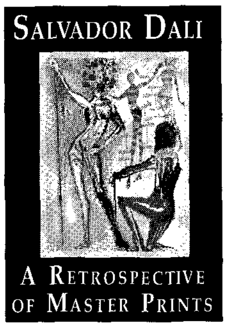

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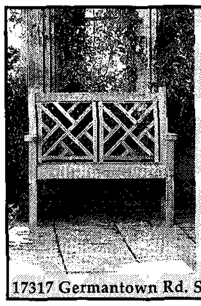

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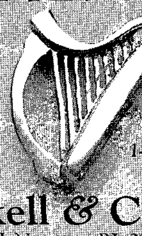

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who is the twenty-eight-year-old editor of *Arena*—a sort of English *Details*. "A lot of the identity of the city is forged on the basis of that. The whole young black generation—the whole hip-hop thing—is very, very alive in New York, and it has a marked effect on the character of the city." So part of the romance with America that you find in black Britain has to do with a sense that America has, racially speaking, a critical mass.

The allure of America isn't just that of indelible blackness, though. It's also the allure of class mobility. Of all the black Londoners I've spoken to, Trevor Phillips delivers the most impassioned homage to America, and it's in precisely these terms: "I think the thing about the West Indians in the United States—and I know it's probably not fashionable to say this—is the openness of American society. There is, I think, genuine social mobility if you're ready for it." He's convinced of this because of his father's fortunes. His father left school at thirteen and had never learned to write other than in block capitals; in England, he worked in the post office. Trevor remembers visiting his father at work one day, in a large sorting office manned largely by blacks. "They were all wearing Post Office uniforms, blue jackets with red piping, and then across the floor comes a white man wearing a suit, a gray suit, and my father said to me simply, 'That's one of the guv'nors,' meaning that it was one of the bosses. The way he said it signified two things: that this man is completely separate from us, and that no matter what I, George Phillips, do—no matter how much people respect me, no matter how well I know my job—I will never be one of them." Then his father came to New York, got a job as a security guard at Columbia University, and decided, for some reason, to go to night school and learn bookkeeping. "In a year, I think, he had become the treasurer of a little think tank at Columbia called the American Assembly. This guy goes to the United States, he gets some education at the age of fifty-seven, gets his qualifications, and he ends up signing for Henry Kissinger's expenses." Phillips is practically swelling in the recitation—there's a nearly evangelical fervor to his voice now—and he looks at me as if to say, How can you not love a country like that?

Like many other British blacks, it must be said, he has a slightly romantic view of black America. "The idea that my children could grow up in a place where all kinds of rich people, the people who call the shots, who feel comfortable in their skins, are black—that's the greatest advantage I could give them," he says. It's a seductive image, this land where blacks call the shots, and one I often hear yearningly invoked by black Brits. They'd disavow it, of course, but I detect an implicit fantasy of black America as a Cotswolds village populated by Oprah Winfrey, Bill Cosby, Michael Jordan, Terry McMillan, Spike Lee, Michael Jackson, Quincy Jones, Vernon Jordan, and dozens more of their ilk. ("Yo, Trev—sorry this is kind of last-minute, but Oprah, Cos, and Colin were thinking about snagging a bite at Georgia Brown's and then maybe popping over to the Senate to try and talk some sense into them about the new education bill. Care to join us?") *That's* their American fantasy, and it seems unsporting to demur.

WHAT'S curious is that, while black Londoners look yearningly across the Atlantic, their American counterparts in the arts increasingly turn to them for inspiration. Thelma Golden, a curator of contemporary art at the Whitney Museum, in New York, is voluble on the subject of how much more vibrant—how much more advanced—the new black arts scene in London is compared with its New York equivalent. "In a way, I'd much rather be a black curator in London than in New York, because the excitement and sophistication there is extraordinary, way ahead of what's happening here in New York," she told me.

"Most thinking people don't know that there is a huge creative upsurge going on in the young black generation," Stuart Hall says. Hall was born and educated in Jamaica, came to England in 1951, as a Rhodes Scholar, and has watched three successive generations learn what it means to be black and British. But clearly the word is getting out, in part because of people like Hall himself. A soft-spoken man in his early sixties, with warm light-brown skin, a close-cropped gray beard, and a gentle manner, he is a tutelary figure for dozens of artists who constitute, in a free-form way, a postmodern black arts scene. He himself has played a central role in this development; indeed, for some he

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has a nearly guru-like status. The black photographer David A. Bailey says of him, "People will say, 'Tell us your stories, Obi-Wan Kenobi.' " But Hall's characteristic tone is far from oracular. What he brings to London's black arts scene is really a set of emphases; for him, identities are things we make up, but not just out of any old thing. As he puts it, "identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves in, the narratives of the past."

Today, Hall and his wife, Catherine, live on Mowbray Road, in Kilburn, in a three-story yellow brick Victorian house. Hall has a high-ceilinged, book-lined study on the second floor; on the way to it you pass by a patrician-looking portrait of his nearly white grandfather. Amid the Jane Austen and Henry James are books with titles like "The Photographs of Rotimi Fani-Kayode" and "Race and the Education of Desire." There's a poster for Isaac Julien's 1986 film "Looking for Langston," and another for the fiftieth-anniversary staging of a C. L. R. James play, produced by Yvonne Brewster. Hall's movements are cautious, and he uses a cane to get around—he's in chronic pain—yet he grows animated when he talks about the coalescence of the new artistic vanguard in black London, one that's devoted to reinventing the very idea of British identity.

He shows me some photographs of the late Rotimi Fani-Kayode, who belonged to a prominent Yoruba family in Nigeria and settled in London, and, Hall says, managed "to use all the elements of his cultural heritage with a kind of equal weight and yet at the same time to transform each by the presence of the other." Still, it isn't insignificant that Fani-Kayode's principal subject was the black body. "What's happened with the new generation is that they've begun to acknowledge their own blackness," Hall argues. "They've begun to paint and photograph their own bodies. They can live with their own bodies—this is a very important turning point." This inward turn has meant leaving behind a "progressive" convention of the eighties: using "black" to refer indifferently to all nonwhites, including South Asians. "People don't use 'black' in quite that way any longer, because they want to identify more precisely where they come from, culturally," Hall says. That moment of self-reflexivity plays out in all sorts of ways:

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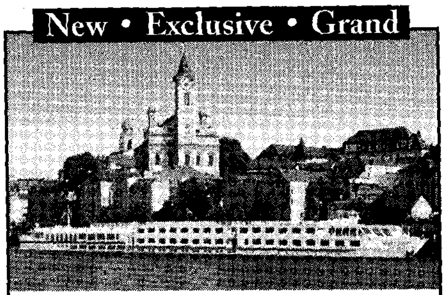

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Sonia Boyce's four-panel drawing "Lay Back, Keep Quiet, and Think of What Made Britain So Great" (1986) positions her own brown visage in a wallpaper pattern that was designed to mark the fiftieth year of Victoria's reign; filmmakers like Isaac Julien and John Akomfra produce visual meditations on memory and migration; multimedia artists like Keith Piper use computer-abetted installations to reflect on the politics of image. All these artists acknowledge their indebtedness to Hall, and yet for him the real significance of the new black arts scene is that it isn't, any longer, a black arts scene. "It's reached the point where a lot of artists who began by identifying themselves with ethnic minority groups have fought off the 'burden of representation'—the idea that they have to speak on behalf of their entire race. They're moving outward into engaging in a more culturally diverse mainstream. They're questioning and diversifying that mainstream."

THE challenge of questioning and diversifying the mainstream is something that Lord Taylor of Warwick knows intimately, and, as we sat in the Peers' Guest Room of the House of Lords, he told me about the contrasts between his own career and that of his father, Derief Taylor. His father was a champion cricket player from Jamaica who went on to play for Warwick; he was also a qualified accountant. When he retired from the playing field, however, he could only find work doing menial labor. "He was always striving to improve himself," Lord Taylor says, "and then he reached a kind of ceiling and began to sort of see his ambitions through me." Taylor, for his part, went on to become the first black to be head pupil at Moseley Grammar School, in Birmingham, and the first black to win the Gray's Inn Advocacy Prize, and—when the Criminal Evidence (Amendment) Bill is enacted—he will be the first black to create British law.

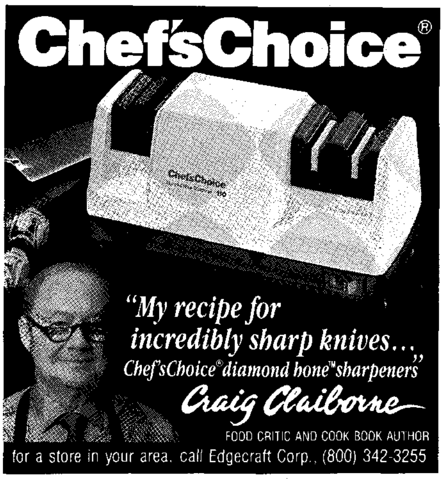
"Some tea, milord?" a florid-faced servant murmurs. Lord Taylor—England's only, though not its first, black Lord—graciously murmurs assent.

And yet the story of his ennoblement—he has enjoyed this salutation for less than six months—isn't an altogether edifying one. It seems that when the Tory Party put him up for a vacant seat in Cheltenham, vociferous protests came from the Party locals—retired colonels and other stalwarts, who had a hard time seeing themselves represented by the son of a Jamaican cricketer and laborer. He was forced to stand aside. That episode embarrassed the national Party, and Prime Minister John Major sought to make the best of things by arranging for him to receive a peerage. "None of the parties have a good record on race, one has to be honest about that," Lord Taylor admits.

Ultimately, though, he believes that black Britain's destiny belongs to black Britain—something that does give him pause. "Trevor's right—I think the aspirational thing is part of Asian culture, but it certainly is not part of the Afro-Caribbean culture here," he says. "If you read the Afro-Caribbean newspapers, week by week it tends to be gloom and doom—deaths in police custody, unemployment, some black person taking her company to the industrial tribunal because of being sacked or not getting the right job, and all that sort of thing. And we all identify with it. Just because we're professionals, we all identify with it."

As is true of so many of black London's illuminati, Lord Taylor has a corresponding fascination with the global preëminence of America's black superstars. "We have media and show-biz people who have made it, but they're few in number—no more than ten or eleven—and they don't have the global standing of their American counterparts," Lord Taylor says. He goes on to tell me that as a child in England he took inspiration from a magazine for American blacks. "Many of my positive black role models came from *Ebony*—people like Muhammad Ali, Martin Luther King, Jesse Jackson, Quincy Jones. You know, it was always the élitism, but that encouraged me, because I could see that there were and are successful black people. That was the sweet part of it. The sad part of it was they were all American. They were untouchable in that sense." Having long cherished a fantasy of appearing in *Ebony* himself, Lord Taylor says he was jubilant to learn recently that *Ebony* would be featuring him and his family in its May edition.

THERE are moments—for me, this was one—when an American visitor to black London feels caught in a time warp. Their numbers are small, their achievements still, somehow, mea-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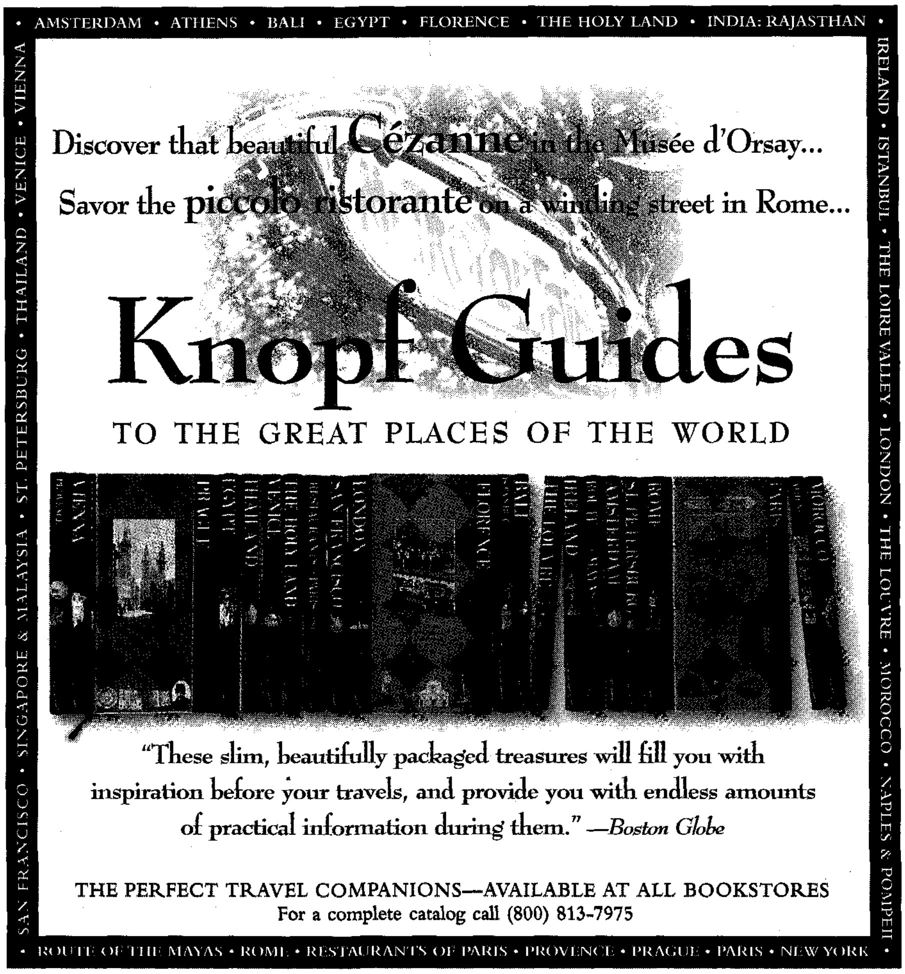
surable. "Just a few weeks ago," Lord Taylor recalls, "an editor at *Ebony* calls me and says, 'Lord Taylor, could you fax me a list of the fifty top black chairmen of companies in England?' I just fell about laughing, and he couldn't understand what the joke was, and I said, 'I can try to get you five,' because they just don't exist. The big companies do not have black directors. That's the whole point." Ekow Eshun says, "The frustrating thing about Britain is that the black presence in this country is decades behind America, especially in terms of high culture." I see what he means, and yet that isn't my reaction. So I'm left struggling to understand why black Britain seems to me at once twenty years behind the times and twenty years ahead, somehow both pre- and post-nationalist. No doubt both temporal impressions are illusory. Yet perhaps what is most heartening about black London is the hope it offers of a consciousness that is cultural rather than racial—that has the capacity to acknowledge difference without fetishizing it, the freedom to represent without having to be representative. In the unending Kulturkampf between irony and solidarity, irony seems to be ahead in black London, at least on points.

As Lord Taylor of Warwick could attest, many things have changed since the nineteen-sixties, when a Tory parliamentary candidate could triumph with the slogan "If you want a nigger neighbor, vote Labour." And many things haven't. "I'm also going into business," Lord Taylor had told me when we spoke. "I'm going to be a sort of corporate headhunter, joining one of the top firms in the world." He was girding himself for the challenge, which he discussed with Dale Carnegie gumption: "A lot of it will be networking—meeting the right people." Even after being raised to the peerage, he'd had more than his share of meeting the wrong people. He recalled an encounter with a woman at a formal cocktail party a few months ago. "So you're Lord Taylor," she said, studying him coolly. "I'll bet you do a good limbo." Today, Taylor's entry in the latest edition of Dod's parliamentary guide appears directly above that of another life baron, one Norman Beresford Tebbit. Make of that what you will. ♦



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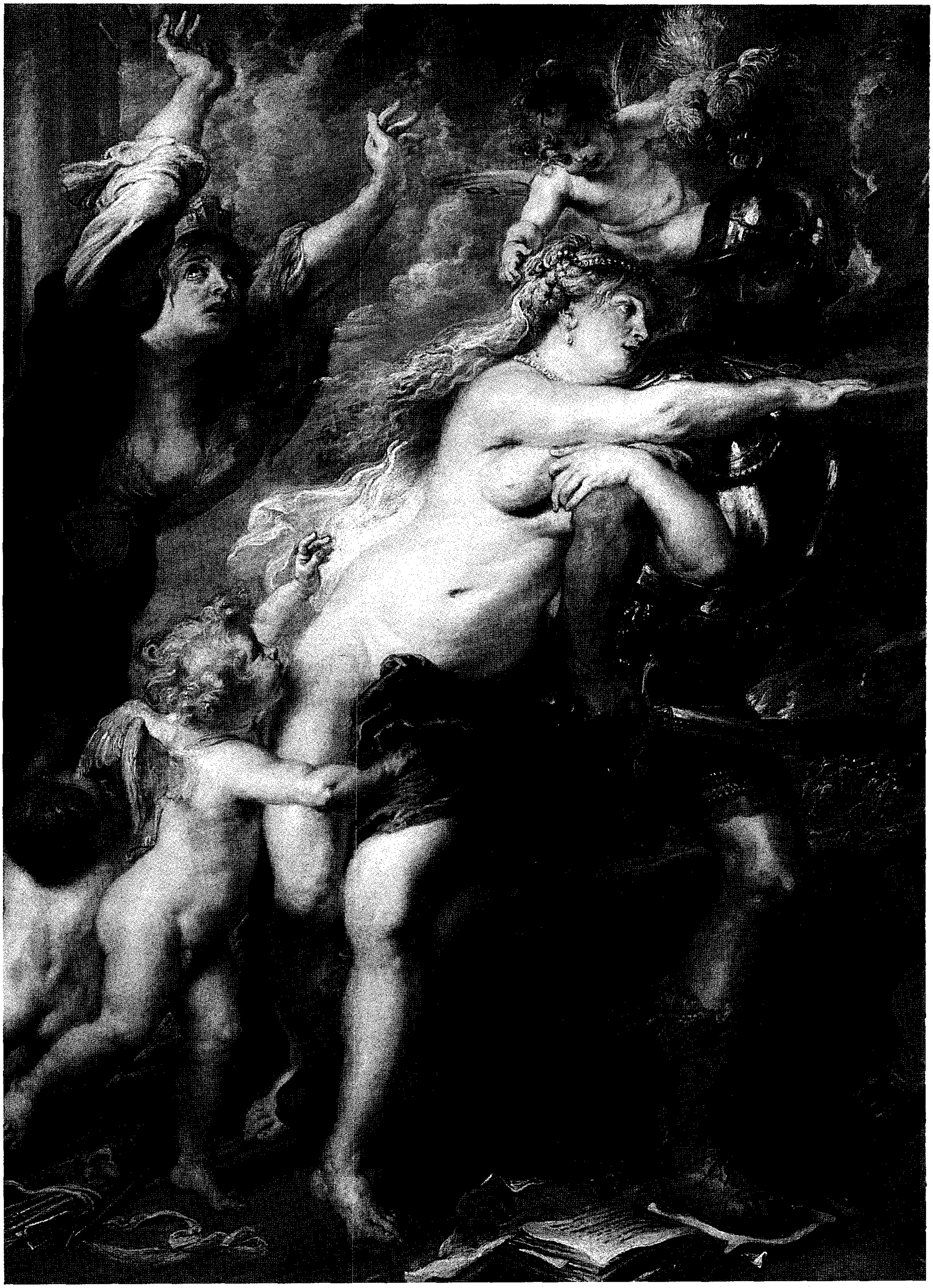
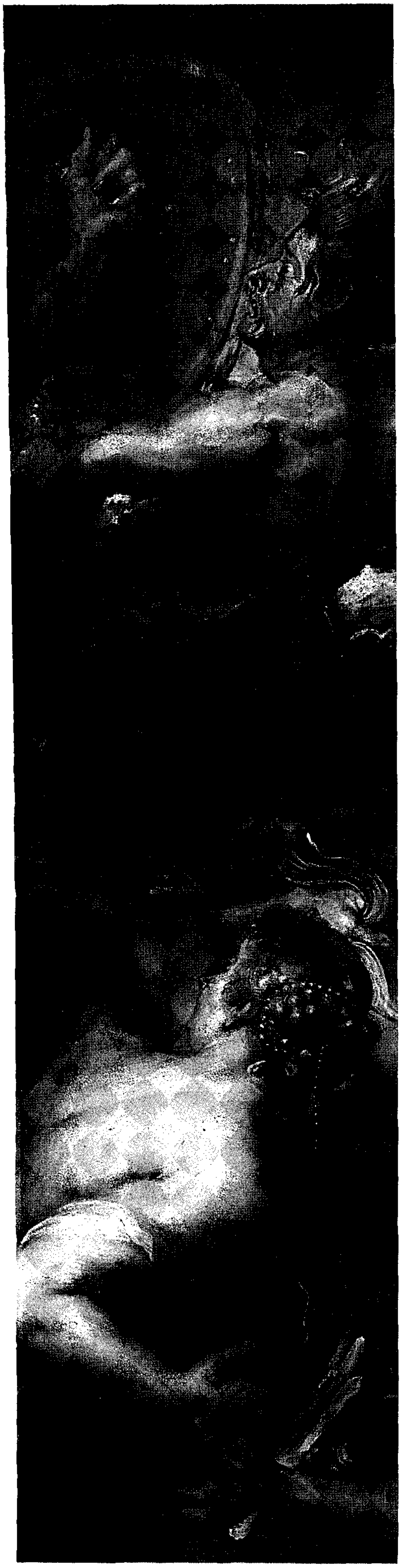


A CRITIC AT LARGE

MR. EUROPE

Peter Paul Rubens and the universalist ideal.

BY SIMON SCHAMA



Detail from "The Horrors of War" (1637-38).

PALAZZO PITTI, FLORENCE/SCALA/ART RESOURCE

EUROPE is in big trouble. Distraught, she throws herself forward, arms outstretched, eyes upturned, imploring the gods to intervene. Behind her, the doors of the Temple of Janus, shut during years of peace, have been opened to let loose the dogs of war. In her plight, Queen Europe is literally coming apart. A lock of blond hair has worked itself free from beneath her turreted crown and falls over her brow. A pearly breast escapes from the ripped, death-black gown. We are meant to think of the breast of merciful Mary, exposed to the Saviour as a gesture of intercession for the sins of mankind. But we think instead that Europe looks like a rape victim, which, in an allegorical manner of speaking, she is. Her painter, Peter Paul Rubens, describes her as "robbed of all her jewels and ornaments . . . the unfortunate Europe who, for so many years now, has suffered plunder, outrage, and misery."

The culprit this time is Mars, whose sword is already bloodied, and whom Venus is doing her best to detain from further mischief. Normally, she is pretty good at this assignment. But despite packing a hefty load of Rubensian allure, not to mention a full complement of backup cupids, she is losing the tug-of-war for her lover to the Fury Alecto, who is having a really bad hair day (that serpent perm) and is hellbent on torching what is left of the civilized world. Not a lot remains: Literature and Art are being trampled beneath Mars' outsized right foot, while Architecture is already on his back, the tools of his trade clutched ineffectually in an injured right hand. Also included among the downtrodden are "a woman with a broken lute, representing Harmony, which is incompatible with the discord of War," and "a mother with her child in her arms, indicating that fecundity, procreation, and charity are thwarted by War." Lying in the dirt are an olive branch (Peace), the snake-entwined rod of the caduceus (Wisdom and Eloquence), and a bundle of arrows (Concord) with its ribbon undone.

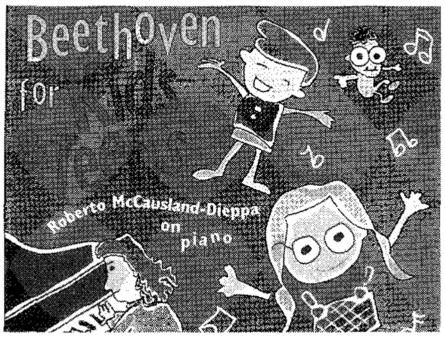
It is 1638. Rubens is sixty: wealthy, multiply knighted, and internationally famous, but racked by spasms of gout which are sometimes so excruciating that he is unable to hold a brush. Habitually frugal in his diet, he is now a little old for the horseback rides that have long been his favorite afternoon exercise. The lines beneath his eyes in the late self-portraits testify to his weariness from campaigning up and down Europe on behalf of a peace that he has sadly concluded he may never see. It has been years since he took an active part in public affairs, preferring instead to keep to his studio and enjoy the company of his second wife, Helena Fourment, who is thirty-seven years his junior, Flanders-flax blond, pneumatic, and comprehensively dimpled. In 1635, Rubens bought the country manor of Steen, where during the clement seasons he spends as much time as possible, painting russet-gold landscapes that transform the flat land between Mechelen and Brussels into a bucolic paradise of rolling hills, panting hounds, and ruddy-cheeked swains. In these autumnal years, Rubens often lets it be known that he wants nothing more to do with the courts and princes who have so often betrayed his expectations of decency and reason. He writes to his friend Jan Gevaerts that "we are living in a time when life itself is possible only if one frees oneself of every burden like a swimmer in a stormy sea." The painting, entitled "The Horrors of War," and executed for the Medici Grand Duke of Tuscany, is his last utterance on the condition of Europe, and by far his most pessimistic.

A decade earlier, he had successfully negotiated a peace treaty between the old and bitter enemies Spain and England. Rubens described his achievement as "the connecting knot in the chain of all the confederations of Europe," and in celebration he painted another allegorical group, representing "Peace and War." This earlier painting is bright with optimism: Mars and Alecto are decisively seen off by wise Minerva; a satyr paws the fruit spilling from the Horn of Plenty; a leopard lolls about like the tamest tabby cat; and a zaftig Pax nurses a chubby Plutus, the baby god of riches. By 1638, it had become impossible to sustain this good cheer. The artist's long-cherished hopes for the reunion of the Catholic Netherlands with the Protestant Dutch Republic had been repeatedly dashed. Fifty years before, the seventeen provinces of the Netherlands divided over allegiance to the militantly Catholic King of Spain, Philip II. A long, grim war of attrition failed to bring the rebel north to heel, and Rubens liked to imagine that persuasion rather than coercion might reconcile the estranged provinces. But while at the outset of the rebellion there had been no thought of Dutch independence, a generation later it had become an established fact, and the new Republic was not about to entrust its dearly bought liberty to the tender mercies of the Spanish absolute monarchy.

The truth was that Catholic zeal had waxed, not waned. In Prague, the Bohemian Protestants had made three errors of judgment. The first was to reject the Habsburg Archduke Ferdinand as their King; the second was to register their disapproval of Ferdinand's regents by tossing them sixty feet out of the window of Prague Castle; the third was a failure to notice the ordure piled up in the moat below, which nicely cushioned their fall. The short-term result of the window-toss was the Battle of the White Mountain, an hourlong rout on November 8, 1620, which destroyed Central European Protestantism and replaced it with an all-out Catholic repression. The more lasting result was to invite into that Central European war the surviving Protestant states—Denmark, Sweden, and the Dutch Republic, all fearful of a Habsburg hegemony. They were joined by anti-imperial Catholic powers, like France, creating a balance of aggression and counter-aggression that produced the first pan-European war: nasty, brutish, and thirty years long.

It became a rule of thumb during the Thirty Years' War never to leave any countryside or country folk available for the enemy's supplies and reinforcement. The passage of an army was accompanied by systematic devastation, creating famine on an unprecedented scale. In the most stricken regions, like the Rhineland and Alsace, rats, dogs, cats, and even soaked cowhide, that staple of the desperate, were in short dietary supply, and starvation inevitably begot cannibalism. Freshly executed felons were being cut down from the gibbets and eaten; mothers were accused of devouring their children. Torture was routinely used to deter the peasantry from signing up with the opposing army. The German writer Grimmelshausen described the "Swedish cocktail," consisting of manure drippings poured down the gullet of a victim; others were baked alive in the bread oven. When the English Ambassador travelled through this countryside, he saw abandoned infants left to starve at the doors of burned huts, and "divers poor people living on dunghills . . . being scarce able to crawl to receive His Excellency's alms." Villagers fled in terror at the sight of his train, assuming it to be yet another band of marauding mercenaries, or of deserters, who periodically emerged from the woods to slaughter travellers or peasants, whichever prey was the nearer to hand. The roads had become so hazardous that Rubens worried, with good reason, over the safe delivery of his painting. "Please God," he wrote to the Flemish painter Justus Sustermans, his contact in Florence, "you receive it soon and in good condition."

Three hundred years later, Pablo Picasso borrowed from Rubens's painting the detail of the frantic, grieving Europe, arms flung in the air, for "Guernica," his essay on the bloody nightmare of his own times. He may perhaps have known that Rubens, who had spent time in Spain, and in 1629-30 was its accredited plenipotentiary in London, felt pas-



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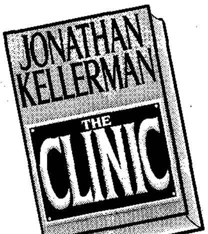

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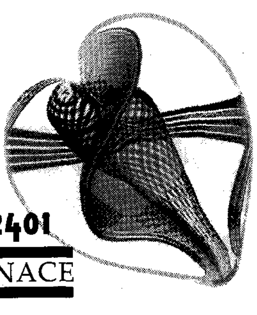

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sionately about Europe's destiny, for good or ill. Picasso's involvement in politics was notoriously intermittent, mostly confined to the years of the Spanish Civil War and to his dalliance with Communism after the Second World War. It was natural for him to retreat into a modernist universe, where the principal preoccupation of art was art, not the brutal vulgarities of politics. Rubens, on the other hand, operated in a world where the reverse was true—where an art separated from the critical matters of faith and allegiance was inconceivable.

BORN in Germany and educated in Flanders, Rubens worked for eight years in Italy; made two prolonged visits to Spain; was on active diplomatic duty in London; received an honorary degree from Cambridge; and in Paris became deeply involved in the venomous politics of Bourbon France. He spoke and wrote four languages fluently, including an openhearted Flemish to his local friends and protégés and a liquid, graceful Italian to almost everyone else. Though he waved away compliments on his Latin, he was in fact an elegant practitioner of that ancient tongue as well. Nominally, his *patria* was the Spanish Netherlands, governed during his most prolific years by the Habsburg Archdukes Albert and Isabella. But his real homeland was the borderless community of the Latin-reading educated classes—a community saturated in, and guided by, the literature and philosophy of antiquity. Like all his fellow-humanists, Rubens sprinkled his speech and correspondence with axioms from Horace, Cicero, and Virgil. When a Danish doctor, Otto Sperling, visited Rubens's studio in Antwerp, he found an assistant reading Tacitus to the painter as he worked. In his marrow, Rubens felt himself to be a citizen of a second, Christian Rome: not the narrow dominion of the Baroque Popes but an empire of the learned, the virtuous, and the civil—a European union based on a common culture rather than on a common currency. "I regard the whole world as my country," he wrote to a French correspondent, "and believe that I should be welcome everywhere."

Rubens the cosmopolitan spoke for one of two ideas of Europe—the universal and the local—which have been in contention for possession of the Continent since at least the first millennium,

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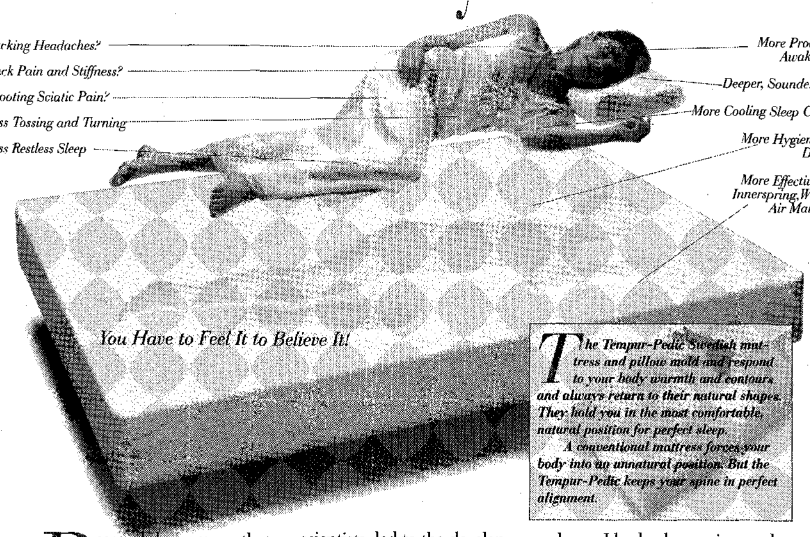
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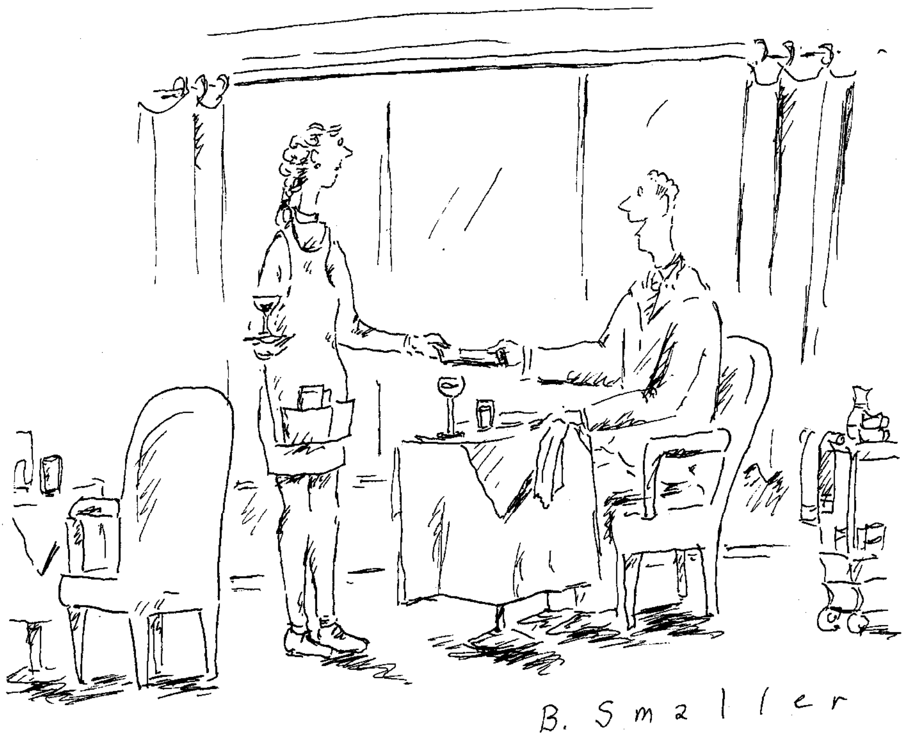

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and the struggle between them shows no sign of abating as it enters the third. The first of these ideas, Latin universalism, assumed a common language and law, transmitted from a single civilizing center through administration, education, and, should the occasion arise, periodic doses of corrective military discipline. The rulers of that center took it for granted that the blessings of stability and prosperity would meet the desires of all reasonable men, even if these things had to be secured at the expense of local liberty. Who in his right mind could possibly prefer the anarchy of mutually unintelligible and perpetually warring tribes, or the grim and sanguine cults of the impenetrable woodlands, to the sun-soaked contentment of the Pax Romana? When barbarian Europe became Christianized, the Papacy inherited this universalism and proclaimed its supremacy over and above the dominion of feudal monarchs. The Renaissance humanists who rediscovered the literature of antiquity merely transferred custody of this tradition from the Popes to princes; Dante's "De Monarchia" argued that universal peace was best guarded by a disinterested but absolute Emperor.

The trouble with this universalist version of European identity is that it presupposes political animals—rational, disinterested, and for the most part unattached to local allegiance—who exist exclusively in the imagination of the educated and bureaucratic classes. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century geographers and chroniclers, working for regional princes like the Tudors or the Valois, understood this, and began to develop the alternative notion that different climates and landscapes might condition incommensurably different manners and mores. Some of the local histories even added an element of ethnic anatomy to their geographical determinism. Carlos Garcia's "Antipathy Between the Spanish and French Peoples," published in 1617, for example, catalogued these incompatibilities: "The French wear their hair long, the Spaniards short; the French have slim legs, the Spaniards legs so sturdy that a Spaniard's calf is as thick as a Frenchman's thigh . . . the French eat a lot, the Spanish little." By the end of the eighteenth century, xenophobic folklore had developed into a systematic ethnography of difference in the writing of Johann Gottfried Herder. To the French *philosophes* who airily assumed that linguistic difference was a construct artificially laid over common humanity, Herder retorted that

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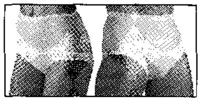

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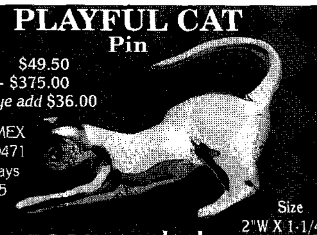

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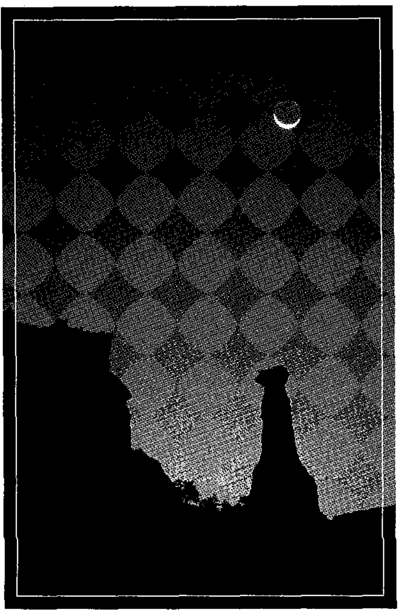
language was the vehicle of social authenticity, and that communities were shaped by its nuances, much as they were also shaped by native characteristics of custom, dress, music, deportment, and diet. Both Herder and Edmund Burke argued that over many generations such communities of speech and social habits developed their own spontaneous patterns of allegiance, and that, precisely because those loyalties were inherited rather than decreed—*felt* rather than learned—they came far closer to human nature than any centrally prescribed uniformity.

On the face of it, the French Revolution promoted a fresh cult of universalism, in which the anachronisms of dynasts and customs barriers would be swept away within a great fraternity of free peoples. Nineteenth-century Marxism merely superimposed proletarian internationalism over the same utopian template. But in both cases the revolutions turned out to serve nationalist rather than internationalist ends, establishing fraternity strictly on the terms of the biggest brother—French, Russian, or, more recently, Chinese. Whether on the soccer field or on the battlefield, it has almost always proved easier to mobilize popular passions in the national rather than the international cause.

The struggle between the Europe of the head and the Europe of the heart, the Europe of pragmatic interests and the Europe of tribal loyalty, remains unresolved. So it should hardly be a surprise to see integration taking place at the same time as disintegration. Germany expands; Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia break apart. Old political boundaries soften while within them new regional and national identities sharpen. The United Kingdom, on the verge of its election, seems neither particularly united nor auspiciously royal, while in Italy Umberto Bossi's Northern League would like to repeal the Risorgimento, thereby cutting the country in two. And below all the polite rhetoric of federalism can be heard the familiar noise of xenophobic growling coming from the parties of "pure nationality" in Marseilles and Rostock.

Rubens would have been disappointed, not surprised, by these conflicts. By education and intellect, he remained all his life a committed partisan of hu-



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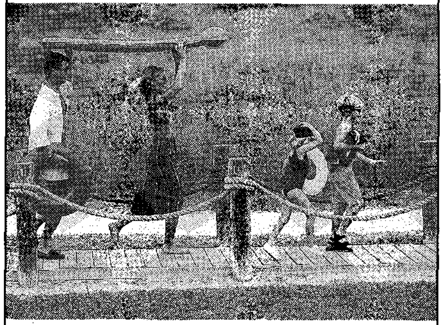

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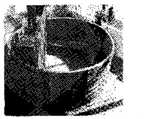

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manist internationalism, but he had learned from the master philosopher of his generation, Justus Lipsius, that such ideals seldom find a place in the strategies of the powerful. And he would learn the hard way that *raison d'état* was not the same thing as a state of reason.

MORE than any other artist before or since, Rubens was alive to these issues because, in startling ways, his personal history was also Europe's. His father, Jan, the stepson of a prosperous Antwerp spice merchant, had been sent to Italy for a patrician education and had come back garlanded with law degrees. He had then risen swiftly through the ranks of the local oligarchy, marrying well and becoming, at the age of thirty-one, one of the city's eighteen aldermen. To cut a grand figure in Antwerp in 1562 was to be about as grand as you could get, at least north of the Alps, and even the Ambassador of the Serene Republic of the Adriatic had been forced to admit, doubtless through gritted teeth, that when he beheld Antwerp it was "Venice outdone." So, indeed, it was: a world city, a hundred thousand strong; an imperial boomtown, culturally polyglot; an entrepôt of ideas and money as well as of goods and arts. It was the hub of the first truly global economy, stretching from the East Indies to Peru: an international port packed with shipping, a mart of luxuries and necessities, and the site of the first bourse to resemble a modern stock exchange. It boasted the biggest parish church in Christendom and, by the fifteen-sixties, a brand-new, Italianate town hall, ornamented with pink and gold marble, which made the palace of the Doges seem, by comparison, quaintly Gothic. Antwerp had also long been conscious of the meaninglessness of political boundaries (even though the great Flemish mathematician-cartographer Gerardus Mercator was the first to publish them). In the course of two centuries, Flanders had twice changed sovereigns—from the Dukes of Burgundy to the Habsburg Holy Roman Emperor and then to the King of Spain. But its status as a supreme imperial metropolis made it excessively confident that it could survive changes of lordship. After all, without its great banks the princes would run short of pikemen and siege mortars; without its warehouses Europe would have been deprived of Indian pepper, Persian silks, Spanish leather, and Mexican silver. Without its printing presses, an entire multicultural literature would have gone unpublished—almanacs and anatomies, breviaries and hagiographies, herbals and histories. For an intoxicating few decades, Antwerp *was* European civilization.

It was the senior Rubens's bad luck to come into this unparalleled civic magnificence precisely at the point when it was overtaken by calamity. Up until 1566, his life had been crowded with blessings. After that date, it was a parade of blunders and transgressions. The first misjudgment on his part was to flirt with Calvinism just as its preachers were persuading their flocks that church images, from stained-glass windows to altarpieces, violated the Commandment against idolatry and were thus the work of Satan. The orgy of iconoclastic destruction that ensued prompted the King of Spain to send an army of occupation and repression to Flanders. During the terror that was imposed on Antwerp, Jan Rubens, as one of the senior aldermen, was forced to answer charges that he had been associated with heresy. Rather than wait to see if he would share the fate of colleagues who had already met their death at the hands of such tribunals, he took his wife and children (he then had four sons and daughters) into exile, settling in Cologne. There he found a position as legal adviser to Anna of Saxony, the second wife of William of Orange, who led the rebellion against the Spanish crown. With her husband away on the battlefield or panhandling the Protestant princes for campaign contributions, Anna needed help and, unfortunately for Jan Rubens, a lot of comfort. Prince William's agents, who had been worrying for some time about the Princess's weakness for Rhenish wine, had lately also begun to notice a suspicious swelling that even the most capacious farthingale failed to conceal. In March of 1571, Jan Rubens's understandably horrified wife, Maria, learned that her husband, who had indeed been spending a good deal of time away on the Princess's business, was now in prison on a charge of adultery.

The sentence for this crime was death. Jan Rubens fully expected it, and hoped only that he might be executed with the sword, as befitted a gentleman, rather than with the hangman's noose.

He had, however, underestimated his wife, the wronged Maria. Everyone had. Writing her husband that "on the one condition that you love me as you were wont" she would pardon his "little misdemeanor," Maria embarked on a two-year campaign of piety and pestering which resulted, in the end, in her husband's conditional release to house arrest. It was during that period, in the gritty little mining town of Siegen, that Peter Paul was born, in 1577. Not long into his infancy, the family was allowed to move back to Cologne, although Rubens senior remained subject to parole conditions that, if violated, could have brought him back to prison, or even to the block.

On the death of her husband, in 1587, the widow Rubens took her family back to Antwerp, where they once more lived as traditional Catholics. The city, after changing hands many times in the course of the war, had fallen to the Spanish army of the Duke of Parma. Waves of Protestant emigrants, as well as a deep economic depression brought on by the war, had shrunk its population by half. Even so, it was by no means a ghost town. It still had its luxury trades in glass, decorated leather, and tapestries, and it still had many of its printers, painters, and scholars. Paradoxically, the iconoclasm had generated a fresh demand for artists who could redecorate the damaged churches. The available pool of artists, however, had divided more sharply than ever before into the parochial and the international. Early in his career, Rubens aspired to the latter group, to be seen not as a mere craftsman but as a learned intellectual, capable of holding his own with the Italian masters. Accordingly, he transferred from an apprenticeship with a local Flemish master to Otto van Veen, a painter who had been to Italy, and fancied himself as a *pictus doctor*, a scholar-artist.

In 1600, Rubens himself travelled to Italy, where he became court painter to the Duke of Mantua, Vincenzo Gonzaga. The eight years of his Italian sojourn were his metamorphosis. He arrived as a gifted nobody and left as a master to be reckoned with—destined to be mentioned in the same breath as Caravaggio and Guido Reni. Rubens's legendary resourcefulness played almost as much a part as his talent in garnering this recognition. In 1603, the Duke of Mantua sent him to Spain with a gift of six white horses and crystal vases filled with perfume for the King, as well as a parcel of Italian paintings for the King's favorite, the Duke of Lerma. Rubens opened the carefully packed crates to find the canvases blistered with mold, despite his best efforts to protect them from the endless spring downpour. His skill at retouching was so prodigious that no one was much the wiser, and he earned the prized commission of painting Lerma's equestrian portrait. Though Vincenzo Gonzaga was strangely obsessed with using "my Fleming" as a glamorizer—requiring Rubens to paint portraits of "the most beautiful women" for his ducal collection—he eventually had him paint a great altarpiece for the Jesuit church in Mantua, featuring the Gonzaga family worshipping an apparition of the Trinity which appeared to them on a mysteriously airborne tapestry. In Rome, where, in 1606, Rubens shared a house near the Spanish Steps with his brother Philip, he won the plum commission of an altarpiece for the richly endowed Santa Maria in Vallicella, against all the Italian competition.

In 1608, Rubens returned to Antwerp, just too late to be at the deathbed of his mother. He was now not just a local boy who had made good in Italy but an internationally recognized presence. In Genoa, he had invented an entirely new genre of portraiture—full-length bravura paintings of aristocratic women in outdoor terraced settings, their sharp little faces poking up through tight Spanish ruffs, their bodies descending in waterfalls of brilliantly hued fabric. The formality of the poses (a must for the Hispanically oriented Genoese) was softened by the light but seductive Rubensian kiss of nature: a Ligurian breeze that barely stirred the silk; a high-colored macaw acting as foil for the more discreetly plumed *principessa*. But it was Rubens's altarpieces that finally gave the lie to Michelangelo's old gibe that, while the sturdy Flemish were all well and good as landscapists, they were culturally underequipped for the noble and high-minded work of history painting. Everything about Rubens confounded this hoary prejudice: his dauntingly encyclo-

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pedic learning; his unrivalled grace as a cosmopolitan gentleman; his easy manner with princes and plebeians alike; and, not least, his compositional ingenuity and power.

All these qualities were immediately recognized when Rubens got back to Antwerp. The Habsburg Archdukes Albert and Isabella, who had been ceded sovereignty over the Catholic southern provinces, aspired to restore the international culture of Flanders, and needed a figure who made the invidious distinctions between "Spanish," "Flemish," and "Italian" styles redundant. Rubens was so obviously their man that he was not only made court painter but given the freedom to live in Antwerp rather than with the court, at Brussels. Before any time had passed, he was having to turn away students by the hundred, and was embarked on the great program of religious paintings that would rival, for emotional power and muscular dynamism, anything produced on the canvases of Baroque Italy.

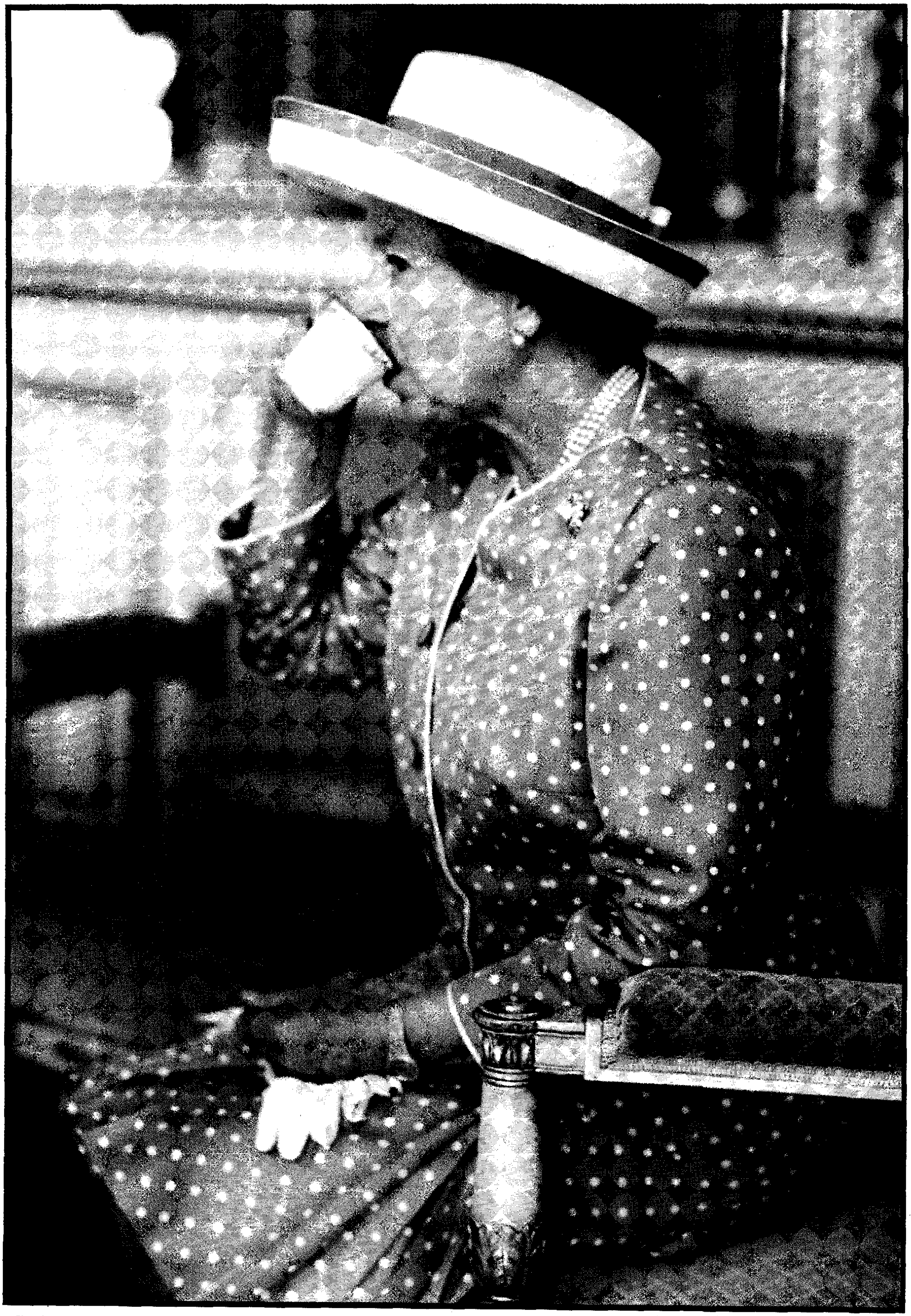
It was an auspicious moment for a lavish renovation. A truce, which would last for twelve precious years, had been signed between the Archdukes and the Dutch Republic. The cessation of hostilities produced a spurt of capital and skilled labor, reinvigorating the depleted Flemish economy and generating funds for both secular and religious commissions. Traditionally, some of the most important art patrons had been militia guilds, and one of them put up the funds for Rubens's greatest masterpiece of these years: "The Deposition from the Cross," painted for a chapel in Antwerp Cathedral. The theme that united the three panels was light in darkness—a concept of Michelangelesque boldness. On the back of one panel, for example, a hermit's lantern spotlights the Christ child, borne on the herculean back of an immense St. Christopher. On the front of the same panel, the "light to lighten the Gentiles" pours from the infant Christ, illuminating the aged face of Simeon, who holds the child in his arms. Likewise, in the great central panel Christ's body, which has taken on the alarming pallor of an unconventionally naturalistic cadaver, still appears to emanate an almost phosphorescent glow, which bathes the blood-red costume of St. John and radiates out to the grieving faces of the three Marys. Working at the very top of his form, Rubens understood (much as the most gifted film director might) how a gripping spectacle is constructed—both from startlingly observed detail (the winding sheet clenched between the teeth of a man perched at the top of the Cross; the blood draining from the discarded crown of thorns into a golden basin) and from an unforced integration of color and line which resolves itself into the tragic, burden-laden arc dominating the painting's center.

The fame of the "Deposition" was such that an international demand quickly arose for engraved reproductions. This was met by pirated Dutch prints, until Rubens used his diplomatic leverage to persuade the Dutch authorities to ban any engraving that did not originate in his studio. In 1620, Rubens had Lucas Vorsterman, his personal engraver, make an authorized version, and this print transformed the "Deposition" from a local, on-site masterpiece into a pan-European icon.

Baroque Antwerp was a place that specialized in reconciling opposites—the brassy, beery exuberance of its taverns and street parades with the studious libraries of businessmen scholars. Modern Antwerp seems to have inherited the knack of cultural balance, embodying both the universal and the local European traditions. It manages to be cosmopolitan without losing its native personality; smart without narcissism; businesslike without being taken over by corporate culture; a place of boulevards and alleyways that open into hospitable squares, ventilated by the fishy airs of the Scheldt. The healthy regional identity of Flanders has protected it from much of the political squalor and tribal beastliness that have lately made the little kingdom of Belgium an awkwardly disunited corner of the European Union. It is also largely free of the bureaucratic colonization, institutional pomposity, and interminable urban makeovers that characterize claustrophobic Brussels. In the official capital of Europe, there's a monotonous Anglo-Gallo-Germanism that drones through the offices, bars, and restaurants. What's missing is Antwerp's spontaneously jumbled diversity: Hasidim on bicycles, Zaireans at *frites* stands, homegrown punks with viridian hair booting soccer balls at twilight in front of the Jesuit church. Only in Antwerp would the best zoo in Europe be right next door to the most grandiloquent railway station in Europe. Renaissance-Mannerist on the exterior, the station is a towering Beaux-Arts basilica on the inside, with the most gorgeous waiting room anywhere east of Grand Central: an industrial revolution–rococo confection of mirrors and painted plaster. And, if the city has successfully negotiated a place for itself between uniformity and parochialism, it has also found a secure temporal mooring between past and present. There are places in Antwerp—the exquisite house of Rubens's friend and patron Nicolaas Rockox, in which the painter's dangerously voluptuous "Samson and Delilah" once hung over the mantel—where it's possible to glide into the Flemish silver age and emerge into the dusky streets, with a sense less of having visited a museum than of having spent some time with old friends who just happen to have been dead for three hundred years.

The Meir, where Rubens's mother, putting on a brave face, set up house with her children after the exile in Cologne, has always been Antwerp's place of fashion and commerce, though the flamboyant gables of nineteenth-century Flemish revival and eighteenth-century classicism now preside over the inevitable Body Shop and Guess Jeans. One side street will take you to the saint-choked Jacobskerk, where Rubens and Helena are buried; another leads toward the painter's own house, or rather the simulacrum of it. It was rebuilt during the Second World War, on the original site, and an original ornately sculpted masonry screen dividing the house from the cruciform garden, with a stone summerhouse at one end, still stands. Rubens devotees had long dreamed of restoring the house, which had crumbled into dilapidation within a mediocre nineteenth-century shell, but it was only in 1937 that the municipality acquired the site. And for some time Belgian and, latterly, Flemish nationalists had managed to transform the most cosmopolitan painter of the Baroque into a symbol of local patriotism. The timing of the restoration—during a period when the German occupiers were trying to persuade Flemings that they belonged to a Greater Nordic Empire—may not have been entirely coincidental.

None of this was Rubens's fault. And in fact his house is a graceful hybrid of



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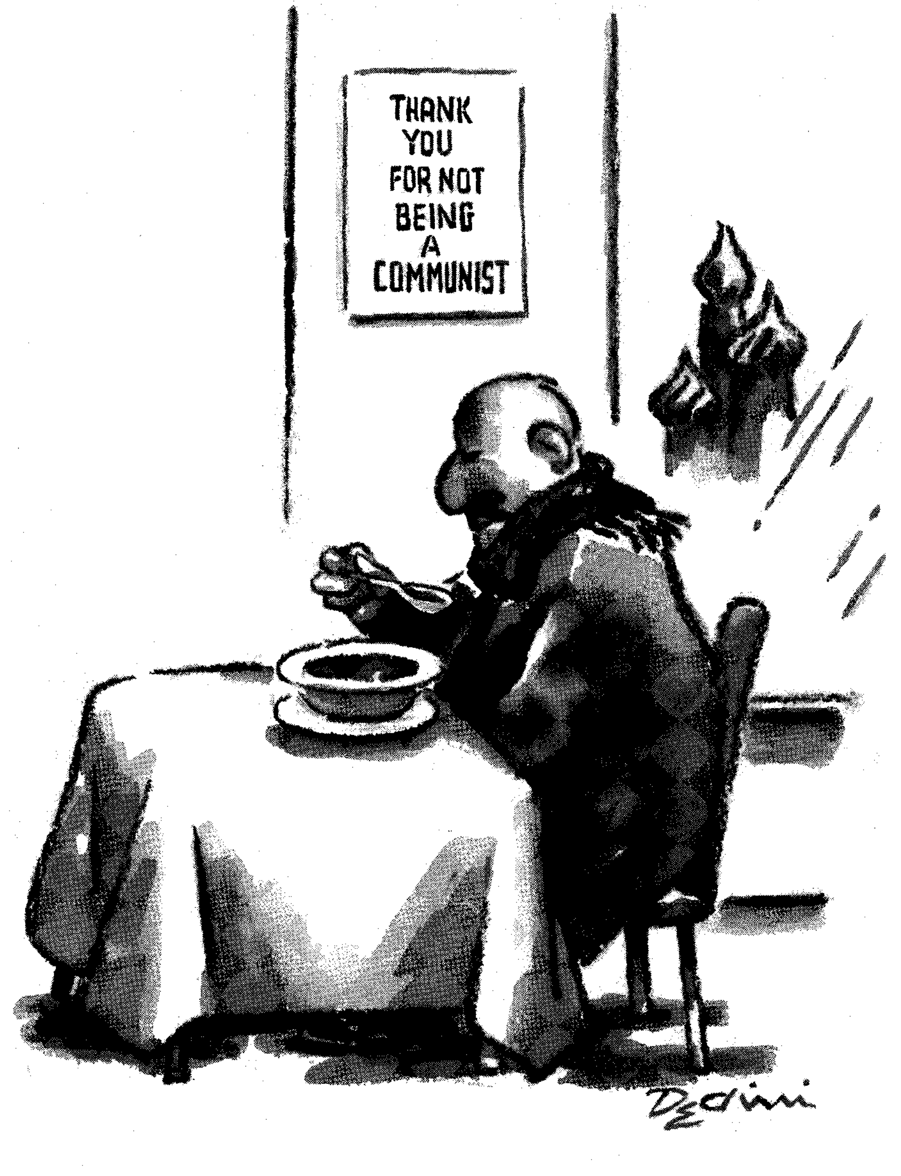
precisely the kind that is poison to cultural fascism. The older portion is a traditional Flemish structure, brick-faced and step-gabled, and with a wide frontage on the street. To this building, acquired in 1610, Rubens added an Italianate wing with working and display space on the ground floor and an atelier on the second floor, lit by a skylight. Quietly elegant on the exterior, rather like the Genoese palazzi, Rubens's house opens onto a spectacularly decorated inner courtyard, its walls lined with sculpture—busts of classical worthies, and illusionistic grisaille frescoes pretending to be classical reliefs and representing favorite stories from antiquity, a number of them featuring the Greek painters Zeuxis and Apelles, to whom Rubens was constantly being compared. Going one better than Zeuxis, who painted grapes so artfully that birds swooped to peck at them, Rubens created a mural facing the garden which was designed to resemble a huge painting hanging to dry from an upper-story window. Between the courtyard and the garden he built the triumphal three-arched portico screen, with banded columns, which was surmounted by Minerva and Mercury, the guardian deities of wisdom and painting, respectively. Plaques set into the masonry are inscribed with maxims from the Roman poet Juvenal, one of them proclaiming Rubens's invincibly Boy Scout belief in "a healthy mind in a healthy body," and the other his Stoic acceptance of fate: "Leave it to the gods to determine what is apt and fitting for us."

No painter, except perhaps Giulio Romano, whose property Rubens had seen in Mantua, ever had a house like this—less a dwelling place than an advertisement for an ideally temperate existence. Like Cicero's villa, it was meant to promote the harmonious union of the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public and the private, the visible and the secluded, the active and the contemplative life. And in almost every respect it was a house that ignored the Alpine frontier between northern and southern taste. It was in the older, Flemish building that Rubens constructed his personal version of the Pantheon in Rome—a showplace for his ancient-sculpture collection, which was the first great installation of antiquities in the Netherlands. As visitors to the restored house can see, Rubens's Pantheon was only a hemispherical space, rather than a complete rotunda, but in other respects—the niches designed to hold busts and statues, and the lighting provided by an oculus set in the roof—it was meant to be a faithful copy of the original.

There were some realities, though, that the fantasy of Italy-in-Flanders could hardly overcome—not least the Belgian drizzle, which meant that Rubens's oculus, unlike the Roman original, was probably not exposed to the sky. And his other cherished dream, of an indivisible Europe, united under the rule of wise princes, also failed to withstand the deluge of renewed hostilities in the sixteen-twenties. Around Maastricht, the trilingual city in Limburg where in 1991 members of the European Community negotiated the current plan for unification, Rubens found roads heaped with corpses and saw pigs running through fields of ripening grain. In 1621, the truce between the Catholic and the Protestant provinces of the Netherlands finally collapsed, and shortly afterward Rubens threw himself into a series of projects, many of which had political implications. In 1622, he was summoned to Paris by the Dowager Queen Marie de Medici, who requested that he undertake a cycle of forty-eight paintings representing her life and that of her assassinated husband, Henri IV, to decorate her new Luxembourg Palace. Initially, Rubens may have imagined that the immense project was politically innocuous: the usual allegorical glorification of a wise and virtuous ruler. But he must also have known of Marie de Medici's notoriously checkered career—the schism with her son, King Louis XIII, her banishment, and their tentative reconciliation. As the series proceeded—it was executed principally back in Antwerp—it became apparent that Rubens had fallen into a royal snake pit. Instead of using the series to promote a reconciliation with her son, Marie, who controlled the content, was evidently using it for a political comeback. Cardinal Richelieu, who had originally been enthusiastic about the project, turned frosty; Rubens's payments began to dry up; and in 1625, when the cycle was unveiled at the betrothal of Marie's daughter Henrietta Maria and Charles Stuart, no mention was made of the money that Rubens was owed. It seemed an ill omen to him that during the ceremonies a platform collapsed, pitching one of his friends into the crowd below.

Rubens knew that the scaffolding of European peace was similarly flimsy, but he persisted against the evidence of his own reason in believing that a stream of blessings might yet flow from a *pax Hispanica*. And he continued his search for model princes, when all that was available was exceptionally unpromising material—the absolutist Bourbons, the Stuarts, and the Habsburgs. It was probably just as well that he never lived to see the spectacle of Charles I—who had made him *Sir* Peter Paul Rubens—being led to his execution, in Whitehall, through the great banqueting hall whose ceiling had been painted with Rubens's frescoes glorifying the preceding reign of James I as a new golden age of peace, prosperity, and justice.

The one ruler whose patience and amiable temper corresponded with Rubens's impossibly high-minded ideals, the Archduchess Isabella, died in 1633, leaving no heirs. This meant that the sovereignty of the Catholic Netherlands reverted to the Kingdom of Spain just when that realm reached its climacteric and was about to head downhill at top speed with no one applying the brakes. Though Rubens worked feverishly to design arches and stages for the triumphal entry of the new governor, the Cardinal-Infante Ferdinand, he had had enough of pomp and politics. And, since Europe was coming to resemble a wilderness, strangled with tares and brambles, he meant to spend his remaining days cultivating his own garden.

THERE, at least, Rubens could create a realm in which love, peace, and abundance flourished, much as they did in his own uxorious household. In the sumptuous "Garden of Love," now in the Prado, the painter and his adolescent

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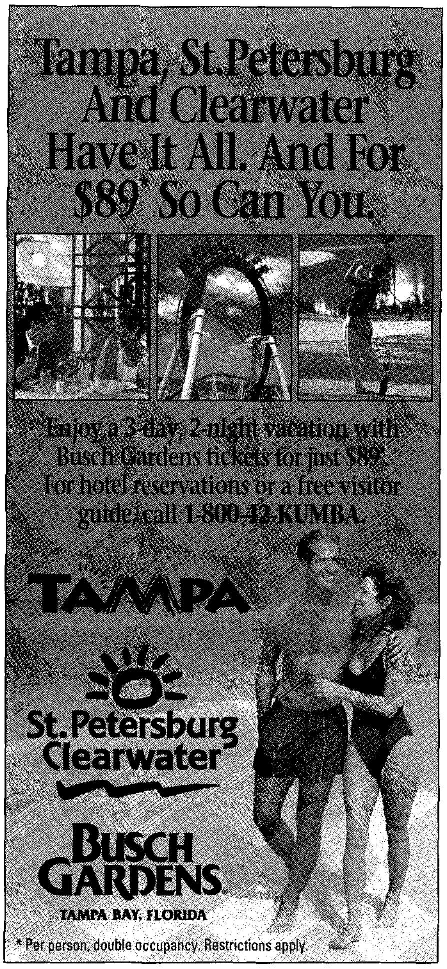
wife seem to dance toward a portico decorated, like Rubens's own, with a banded column, a pediment, and a scalloped keystone amorously entwined with roses. His love-garden canvases grew bigger and bigger, straining to contain a luxuriant riot of orgiastic humanity and fecund vegetation. Often, indeed, the nymphs and cherubs seem as much creations of the vegetable as of the animal world: luscious fruit and bolting flowers, heavily manured by the artist's creative flow. This was Rubens's answer to a world that seemed consumed by mendacity and death: a procreation of Edenic proportions; an immense horticultural hallelujah.

In the sanctuary behind his house, the spite and savagery of the political world were securely banished. But Rubens's *hortus conclusus* was more than just a contemplative asylum; it was also a botanical projection of the way the world ought to be. It comprised species that were diverse but harmonious—incomparably varied yet somehow all intricately connected through the sublime ingenuity of the Creator. A large panel in the Alte Pinakothek, in Munich, painted early in his new marriage, shows the artist blissfully reinvigorated, leading Helena toward their garden pavilion. Lagging a little behind them, dutifully but not especially happily, is Nicolaas, Rubens's son by his first wife. Helena looks thoughtfully at her stepson, who does nothing to acknowledge the glance—the only note of slight discordance in the picture.

At first, the painting seems merely an affectionate visual anecdote—the Rubens family out for a walk. But it is as much a record of the fertility of Rubens's mind, at once amorous and encyclopedic, as it is a depiction of his back yard. The picture is thick with visual love letters done in the botanical manner. The oranges standing in tubs allude to the fragrant blossom commonly carried by brides as an emblem of their redemption from the sin of Eden. Rubens's contemporaries would have recognized the old woman apparently pottering about the garden as Vertumnus, the god of orchards and wine, in disguise in order to seduce Pomona, the guardian nymph of fruit and flowers. And Helena, dressed in a rustic bodice and a straw hat decorated with blooms, is herself a latter-day Pomona, which in turn reveals her husband as the artful Vertumnus, now unconcealed, and about to show her the many and delightful ways in which a vine might wrap itself about a sturdy elm.

Rubens's garden, then, is densely planted with ideas and visions: it is a place that brings together the scattered and richly various phenomena of the wide world in a walled enclosure, in which God the landscapist is working through his chosen servant, Peter Paul. So the gathering of birds, which at first appears random, is in fact anything but. The peacocks of Asia (also the emblem of Juno, the guardian deity of marriage and domesticity) strut amid the turkeys of the New World and the little fowl of Europe. The plant life is painted to represent the concordance of opposites: the orange trees, bearing the golden apples of the Hesperides, are standing beside a bed of tulips—the exotic *tülbend*, which was first brought from the Near East to Europe in the middle of the sixteenth century and planted in Antwerp by the Flemish diplomat Ghislain de Busbecq. That they should be blooming alongside the fruiting oranges is, of course, improbable, although Rubens's contemporaries did in fact believe that a properly walled enclosure could retain enough warmth to grow Mediterranean fruit. One of Rubens's last letters, written from the Château of Steen, asks his protégé the sculptor Lucas Fayd'herbe to remind his gardener to send him the first harvest of figs as well as of Rosile pears. If the painter as diligent horticulturist could accomplish this, might not Europe one day, through the benevolent vigilance of the Celestial Gardener, become a new Paradise Garden?

This stubborn fantasy was not Rubens's alone. In the first decade of the first millennium, the Greek geographer Strabo, writing in Rome, argued that, since Europe was, above all the regions of the world, supremely blessed with a temperate climate and a landscape that could yield every kind of produce, it was necessarily more peace-loving than the warrior races of the arid wastes of the Caucasus or the nomads of the parched Afric shore. Two thousand years of slaughter and chaos, punctuated by an occasional outbreak of civility, might, had he witnessed it, have been enough to see off Strabo's idle fancy. But then again, should his shade walk the quiet paths of Rubens's garden and sit down beside the low yew hedge as a spring twilight gathers in the Antwerp sky, he might yet surrender to his sweet old reverie. ♦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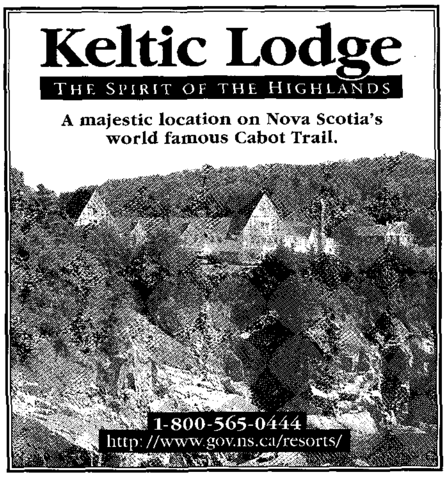
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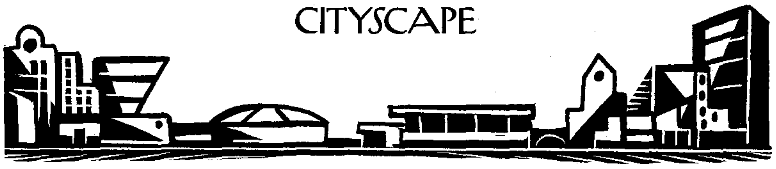

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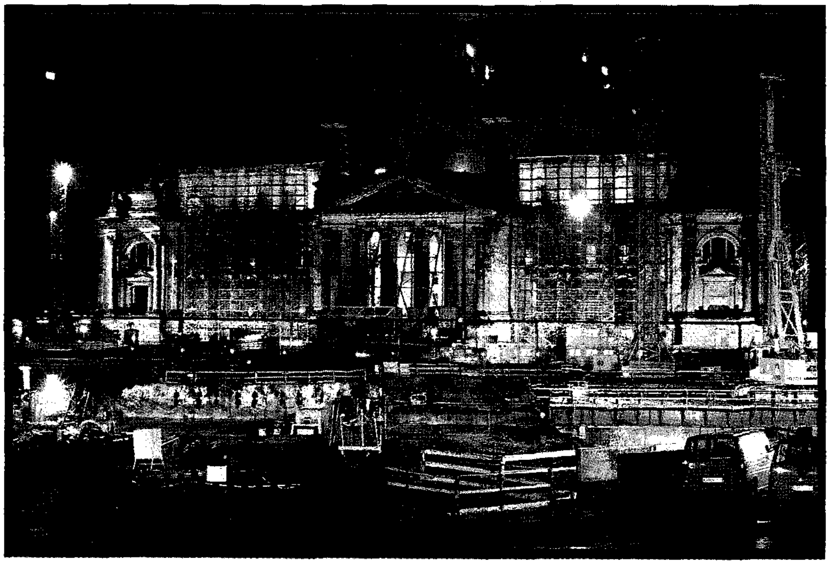
BY PETER CONRAD

BERLIN'S history lies in holes in the ground, and on streets erased from the map.

Take the case of Potsdamer Platz, whose ups, downs, ins, and outs summarize the vexed, destructive course of modern times. Like Berlin in microcosm, this crossroads has for centuries been a theatre of power, a field of contending forces. And now that Berlin is once more the capital of a unified Germany, preparing for the move of government offices from Bonn, Potsdamer Platz is being refurbished to take on its traditional role as a hub for traffic and a place of popular congregation. A team of celebrity architects has been engaged to transform what had become a tract of murky debris into the swankiest urban center in Europe.

Initially, Potsdamer Platz marked the route used by Prussia's kings to travel between Berlin and their country retreat of Sanssouci, in the neighboring town of Potsdam. In the eighteen-twenties, the neoclassical architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel dignified Potsdamer Platz with a pair of guardhouses masquerading as Greek temples. Later, as Berlin grew, the roads that converged here held together the city's western and eastern sides, connecting the ceremonial portal of the Brandenburg Gate with the swarming proletarian district behind Alexanderplatz. By the end of the nineteenth century, the square was a parade ground of imperial pomp and bourgeois affluence. It had swanky hotels called the Palast and the Bellevue, and cornucopian department stores like Wertheim's: an Aladdin's cave of commodities, displayed in a nave of vaulted iron festooned with electric bulbs.

By 1924, Potsdamer Platz was so congested that Europe's first traffic lights were installed to regulate the mob of machines. When Einstein wanted to illustrate the geometrical calculations necessary for determining distance, he chose "the place-specification 'Potsdamer Platz, Berlin' " as "a point on a rigid body" that might be "the scene of an event or of the position of an object in space." Then, in 1945, bombs pulver-


The Reichstag, symbolically reconstructed by the British architect Norman Foster.

PAUL LANGROCK/ZENIT

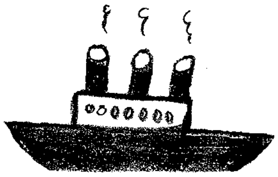
ized the area, and in 1961 the Berlin Wall was built across it, dividing the American and British sectors from the Russian protectorate in the East. Checkpoint Charlie—the crossing point to East Berlin, where you were herded through a wire corral and barked at by border guards—grudgingly opened around the corner. Potsdamer Platz, however, disappeared into limbo. Imagine Times Square turned into a gaping archeological grave.

When the Wall fell, Potsdamer Platz returned to the map. Today, construction cranes swivel across the sky here, and bulldozers nuzzle sand into pyramids. Before 1989, you could climb onto a wooden rostrum and peer across the Wall at the grim ministries and sooty tenements of East Berlin: relics of a future that had failed. Now a new and sleeker viewing platform in the same place offers glimpses of an alternative future. On stilts, bestriding the dust and mud, a red hangar called the Info Box notches up as many visitors as any of Berlin's museums; it allows you to see what the cranes and bulldozers are doing, and displays models of the rehabilitated city.

Daimler-Benz and Sony have divided most of the area between them and are building showcases for their wares, surrounded by apartments, theatres, and a casino. The new Potsdamer Platz will officially bow down before Teutonic engineering and Japanese electronics. But the famous architects at work here have their own agenda. For them, the reconstruction is also a chance to erect monuments to themselves. Daimler-Benz's conurbation includes an elegant, angular terra-cotta tower by Renzo Piano, and a glassy business and shopping center by Richard Rogers (who worked with Piano on the Centre Pompidou, in Paris), which looks like a space station pausing in orbit. Despite such competition, the scene stealer so far is a cheekily unstable office complex by Arata Isozaki (whose Team Disney building in Orlando sports a sundial shaped like Donald Duck's bill and a portico capped by Mickey Mouse's ears). Its roof ripples as if buckling under pressure, and the waywardly patterned panels on its outer walls shudder like a house of cards. Isozaki ironically relishes the chance to build in this former war zone. A city, he believes, is destroyed even as it is created.

A year from completion, Potsdamer Platz is an agitated, incoherent battlefield. Workers protesting against the use of cheap labor from Ireland and Portugal blow whistles and gulp schnapps at the gates while riot police snooze in their van. A kiosk serves sausages beneath an inflatable soda can that commands "Trink Coca-Cola." (Wasn't it American soft drinks, fast food, and pop music that won the Cold War?) A black woman canopied under a tarpaulin sells tinny East German Army helmets. For a fee, she will leave an inky souvenir in your passport, using a rubber stamp once wielded by the guards at Checkpoint Charlie: although the European Union has revoked frontiers, people apparently long for the old divisions and the ancient, reassuring enmities.

So far, the diggers have spared a tumbledown rustic fence and a lilac hedge—reminders that for almost thirty years Potsdamer Platz had quietly reverted to the state of nature. Rabbits, which dodged land mines and trigger-happy sentries to multiply in no man's land, still scamper here. New streets fumble uncertainly along beneath a trellis of pink-and-blue pipes. These pipes have sprouted everywhere in chaotic, churned Berlin, and they testify to the risks and strains of the attempt to reinvent the city. Berlin floats on a marsh. When you break the ground, a lake spontaneously wells up; before foundations can be laid, bogs must be drained. At Potsdamer Platz, construction proceeds inside flooded pits. Teams of divers position anchors underwater, and then—working in the dark, sixty feet beneath the murky surface—they cast concrete slabs on which the buildings will be propped. When this base is secured, the pipes pump out the groundwater. They must take care not to suck the squelching land dry: if they overdo it, the trees will wither in the neighboring Tiergarten (Berlin's Central Park). Sludge from the pits travels east by train, to be poured down the gullet of an abandoned coal mine.



Once complete, Potsdamer Platz may well be as luxuriously dreary as Battery Park City. But at present it looks thrilling (and it's also a God-given setting for

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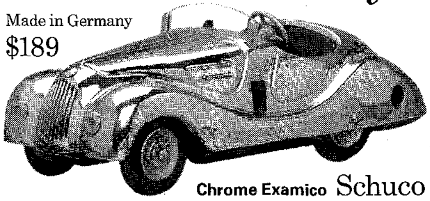

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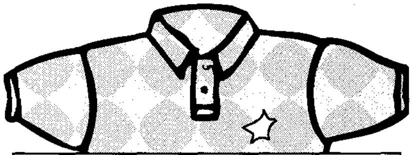

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a thriller). Water slurps in the gouged-out caverns, machines gnaw the earth, the pipes work overtime to drink up the spillage. A skyscraping staircase twists through empty air, without a building to belong to. Seen from far above, the workers are termites in hard hats.

Berliners, used to schisms and seismic upheavals, derive a moral from the mess, the noise, and the disorienting muddle. They know only too well that there is emptiness, or perhaps a quagmire, beneath our feet. I noticed a spray-painted motto on a suburban wall: "*Das Leben ist eine Baustelle*"—"Life is a construction site."

ARATA ISOZAKI once defined the city as "a thing perpetually in a state of ruin"—forever incomplete, dismembered, and restlessly reassembled—and confessed that "for me, the moment of ecstasy is when everything that is built vanishes in a catastrophe." Such architectural nihilism suits Berlin. Hitler used the city as a proving ground for his own deranged theory of "ruin value." The Reich, he predicted, after its thousand years of glory, would molder like Rome. Berlin had to be its architectural testament, with dented arches and limbless giants on pedestals to intimidate scuttling survivors.

The sublimely morbid Nazi theory got its calculations wrong. Ruins are about devaluation; they expose Europe's self-destructiveness and its constant need for face-saving repairs. Berlin's ruination (which happened somewhat sooner than Hitler intended) is gruesome and unheroic. The shattered spire of the Memorial Church looks like the stump of a carious tooth. In the eastern borough of Prenzlauer Berg, now a bohemian enclave, the buildings suffer from skin diseases—acne or eczema at best, sometimes leprosy.

Berlin's liveliest ruin stands just beyond Unter den Linden, the windily triumphal thoroughfare where at one time or another during the last hundred years Prussian regiments strutted, Nazis incinerated books, and East German commissars shuttled officiously to and fro like undertakers in their sinister limousines. Among the bullet-pitted façades in Oranienburger Strasse is a blitzed department store known as Tacheles (which means "straight talk" in Yiddish). Its five stories used to bulge with all

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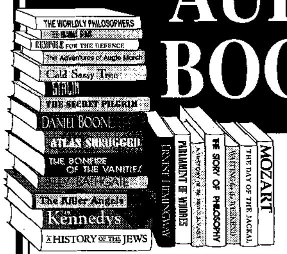

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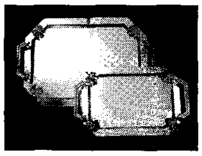

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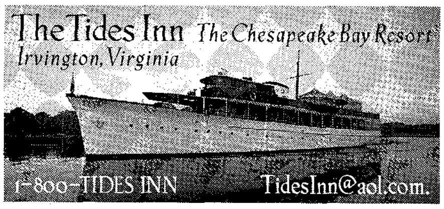

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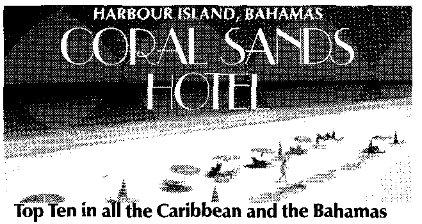

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the goods and chattels essential to the glutted, upholstered bourgeois life. Left more or less to rot under Communist rule, it has now been occupied by a tribe of strung-out, noctambulant artists.

On the dim, rickety stairs near the front door, a band rehearses. The guitarist strums a wooden plank, while the drummer pummels a plastic water flask. Primal screaming can be heard from behind a door: a play is in progress. The walls are a pandemonium of acrylic slogans, the corridors puddled. Behind this haunted house is a sculpture garden, where a helicopter with flailing, buckled rotors has crash-landed. An overturned bus looms from a sandpit. Dogs scratch and scavenge, urinating on spent torpedoes. The earth throbs: somewhere down below, a bunker houses a disco. Ruins at least make an ideal playground.

BERLIN is accustomed to the ruthless perfectionism of architects, and to the decay that inevitably overtakes their grand projects. To carve out a new axis for the capital, Hitler's planners demolished thousands of buildings. An avenue was to be set aside for the display of weapons captured from trampled enemies; a boulevard goose-stepped toward an assembly hall, which would have been the largest building in the world. Hitler intended to change Berlin's name to Germania when the work was complete, and had set aside a date in 1950 for the ceremony.

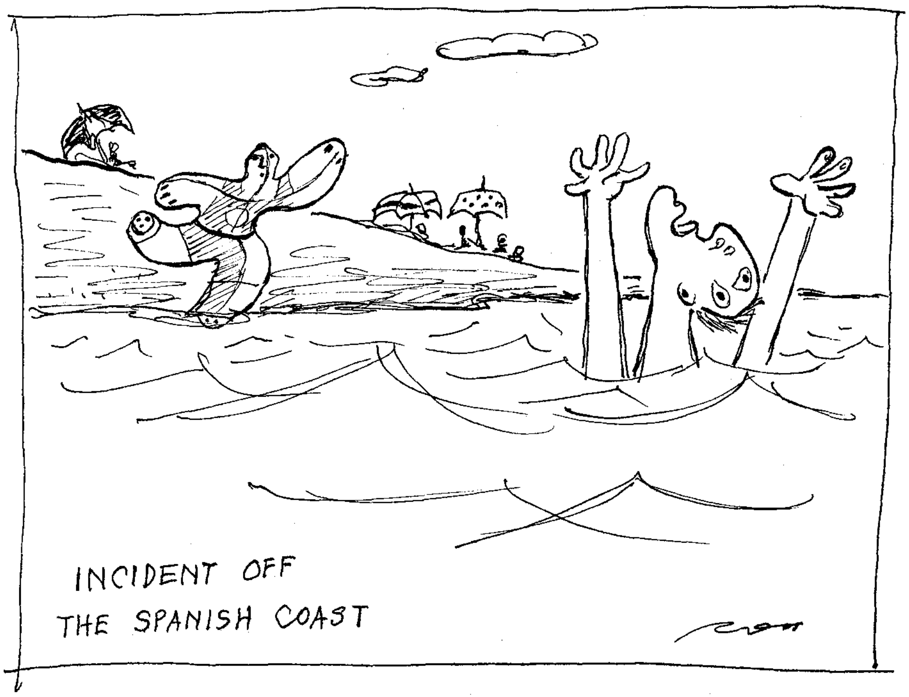
Offered a blank slate at Potsdamer Platz—or, rather, a stretch of scruffy grass, infested by rabbits—Renzo Piano inscribed his own signature on the place. The logo of the Daimler-Benz development, a feathery doodle, derives from one of his earliest scribbles. The lines in his sketch refer to the streets that intersect here; they also, providentially, make up a billowing, boastful "P." Having affixed his own monogram, Piano modelled the site's public spaces on those of his native Italy—sunny, convivial, remote from the seeping skies and northern chill of Berlin. Theater Platz, with its casino and hotel, imitates the fan-shaped piazza at the center of Siena.

"And here," Piano's assistant Roger Baumgarten said to me, "is our Wenice." From the top of a skeletal skyscraper, he pointed down at an artificial lagoon, where turbid water from the construction pits was being cleaned before the pink-and-blue pipes carried it away. Berlin is fond of such fictions, which allow it to fancy that it belongs somewhere else, in some place with a different and less onerous history. Germania has been replaced by another official fantasy: the dream of an ersatz, uprooted Italy.

Setting out to relaunch the state, the government of the newly unified Germany called in image-makers from abroad. Rites of passage were devised for the Reichstag, which the politicians will reoccupy when they move back from Bonn. The cratered, scowling Prussian pile—left derelict after its seizure by the Red Army in 1945, clumsily patched up in the nineteen-sixties—was wrapped by Christo in 1995. It wore its coat of silver cloth like a bridal outfit, or a shroud: the proper costume for a transformation. As soon as this fancy dress came off, the British architect Norman Foster began to reconstruct the building. A glass-and-steel dome will surmount the debating chamber, with a twisted cone of mirrors to refract the sun. Christo covered the Reichstag in order to mystify it, hinting at magical changes inside; Foster promised to make it symbolically transparent.

But glasnost has its limits, as Foster found when he began to design an eagle for the new parliament building. (The old one over the Bundestag rostrum in Bonn could not be moved.) The eagle is Germany's corporate logo, the traditional emblem of Teutonic power. Its spread wings overshadow the earth; it has a pronged beak, and in the past its prehensile claws often used the swastika as a perch. Last year, Foster reflected that—given Germany's aquiline behavior during the twentieth century—the abrupt angle of the eagle's head and the span of its wings might need to be altered. Its talons would also require a manicure. He wanted the bird, it was said, to be "slenderer." There were immediate protests about this foreign campaign to tame the country's pet predator. The iconography of the new eagle (pacified or unrepentant?) remains a state secret.

Meanwhile, in makeshift rituals, the scarred ground of Berlin is consecrated all over again. At the topping-out in Potsdamer Platz last October, Daniel Barenboim—using semaphore flags in-



stead of a baton—conducted a ballet of construction cranes. The stiff machines creaked and nodded in time to the finale of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, which extolls universal brotherhood. A few months before, I came across another plaintive little ceremony. Beside the parched fountain in Alexanderplatz, a crowd of ragged adolescents gazed at the sky, yelping with glee. I looked up: a statue of Michael Jackson was being winched onto the roof of a shop that sold discounted electronic goods. In times of painful transition, any savior will do.

UTE WÜEST VON VELLBERG, Daimler-Benz's cheerleading publicist, daintily wiped the filth of the building site from her shoes and said to me, "Potsdamer Platz is a free land. It has no memory. It is a new country." Here, she believes, the estranged populations of the city's western and eastern halves will come together, fraternally united by the casino and the 3-D cinema. It is a touching faith, yet the expression of it troubled me. Was this, I wondered, the purpose of the building boom—to efface the past?

The Wall has already dematerialized, but a scabby block-long sample still stands near Potsdamer Platz. That stupid, murderous perimeter has become a touristic trinket. If you're credulous enough, you can still buy spurious, candy-colored fragments of it, with the texture and probably the taste of nougat. The exorcists have also been at work around Checkpoint Charlie. In place of slavering guard dogs and the sign that until 1989 balefully warned "You Are Leaving the American Sector," a dapper, cadaverous cutout of Philip Johnson now stands beside an office building he has designed.

Amnesia, however, is no solution; the ground here should not be so easily cleared of its incriminating memories. It's good that at least one building in the new Berlin insists on recalling the past. On Lindenstrasse, a few blocks from Checkpoint Charlie, a canting cliff of zinc looms behind a fence. This is the building that houses the Jewish Museum, designed by Daniel Libeskind and due to open next year. The windows slashed irregularly in its surface track the movements of Berliners who once crossed this plot of land on their way between home and work. Libeskind reconstructed their daily itineraries from antique phone books and street maps, then superimposed the routes on his building's façades. The museum will display mementos of the city's exterminated Jewish population: the bed linen, garden furniture, and toys they left behind, confident that they would return to reclaim them; the register of their signatures, attesting to identities that they forfeited when the concentra-

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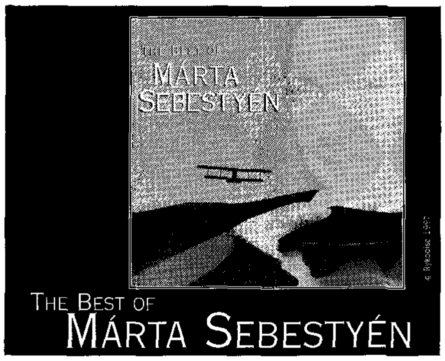

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tion camps translated them into numbers. It will also contain their absence. It is a place of resonant, echoing emptiness, punctuated by tall, hollow, unheated chambers that Libeskind calls "apocalyptic voids." There will be little to look at in the voids. Instead, you will have to think, and to revive the dead by remembering them.

Museums are always hard work (which is why they are good for you); the Jewish Museum is more arduous than most—a penitential travail for the body, as well as a daunting moral trial. You enter it on an underground ramp, feeling the leaden tug of gravity. A steep staircase challenges you to climb it; then, at the top, it confronts you with a dead end. Windows vertically puncture the walls, like stigmata, and beams punch their way in from outside. You cross sudden gulfs on narrow bridges, experiencing the sense of rupture felt by those who fled Germany carrying only a single suitcase. The last void (profaned, when I visited, by the workers' beer cans) is devoted to the nihilistic notion of the Holocaust. The door thuds shut with dread finality. A faint, reflected light shines unreachably far above. The acoustics prepare a trap: your slightest murmur is boomingly amplified in the vault. You soon learn to lower your voice.

I was shown around by Nina Libeskind, the architect's wife and business partner. He envisioned the building; she made sure that it got built. She badgered planners and outmaneuvered the local politicians who tried to cancel the project in 1991 for financial reasons, just as the city—trusting in show biz to redeem Berlin—was planning a costly bid for the Olympic Games.

Outside, an uprooted garden dramatizes the Jewish trauma of enforced migration. Trees, coffined inside stone columns, will struggle to push their leaves and branches into the air. Since the idea of the garden is that exile turns your life upside down, I wondered why Libeskind had not persuaded the trees to stand on their heads. "You want him," asked his shining-eyed wife, "to walk on water also?"

A building about displacement inevitably upsets your equilibrium, and the garden's cobbled floor rises at a steeply raked angle. Your feet fret to maintain their balance while you squeeze through crevices between the forty-nine trapped trees. "At least half the people who come here suffer nausea and have to leave," Mrs. Libeskind told me. This was her proudest compliment to a building that aims, like the performance of a tragedy, to disturb and (if possible) exalt you—to purge you, according to Aristotle's medicinal formula, through pity and fear.

THE earth in Berlin will gobble up anything. The excavations around Potsdamer Platz have disinterred some chipped cups from a prewar café, together with the odd grenade and half a rocket launcher. A sculptural head of Apollo turned up one day; so did a Wehrmacht helmet, still containing its owner's skull. Hitler's bunker skulks across the way, unmarked, in case believers make a shrine of it. In the basement of another vanished building nearby, you can clamber down into the subterranean cells where the Gestapo tortured political prisoners. The walls exude damp and despair.

Tourists shuffle through, and record their reactions in a visitors' book on the way out. The duty of remembrance, blithely alleviated by the new Berlin, is for some of them a dreary chore. Recently, an English yob named Rob scrawled "*Zzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz*" across the page to ventilate his boredom, and a Frenchman recorded his sniffy, supercilious verdict: "*Berlin est laid, ça aussi.*" A couple from Australia, appraising the Holocaust as if it were a snuff movie, awarded the place a mediocre rating: "Cool! But a bit tame on the gory bits!" And a few days before my visit a Palestinian had angrily sketched his national flag, vowed that the Arabs would never surrender, then scribbled a prophetic curse: "*Hamas fickt euch!*" Hamas, that is, will fuck you. When you begin to dig in Berlin, not only water gushes to the surface. ♦

BLOCK THAT METAPHOR!

[*From the Dayton Daily News*]

The criticism of Kenneth Starr is that he knows when to cut and run. Unless he drops another shoe, he may be lucky to get out of town without some tar and feathers from his fans who had hoped he would bring down the Clintons with his 2 1/2-year investigation.

BOOKS BRIEFLY NOTED

Petrolio, by Pier Paolo Pasolini; translated from the Italian by Ann Goldstein (Pantheon; $27). Pasolini was laboring over this novel—a rambling, Sternean concoction that is part epic, part screenplay, and part cosmic joke—when he was murdered in 1975. It's that rare kind of work in which a thirty-page gang bang is followed by a discourse on Fascism and the Italian bourgeoisie, and the protagonist, Carlo, splits in two and morphs into a woman. "Petrolio" is by turns brilliant and lewd, timeless and dated, but when it comes to exasperating the middlebrows Pasolini has, even in death, lost none of his touch.

Class Trip, by Emmanuel Carrère; translated from the French by Linda Coverdale (Metropolitan; $19.95). You might not think that the story of Nicolas, an unpopular bed-wetting young boy made to go on a prolonged ski trip with his class, would turn out to be a thriller. The story seems to be about Nicolas's social anxieties; even when a local boy disappears and becomes the object of a police search, he's the object of Nicolas's fantasies of heroism. This child's-eye view of crime, though lacking the depth of Graham Greene's "The Fallen Idol," is suffused with an ominous tension, like sinister background music.

The Three-Arched Bridge, by Ismail Kadare; translated from the Albanian by John Hodgson (Arcade; $21.95). In this beautifully matter-of-fact parable, a fourteenth-century Albanian monk attempts to "record the lie we saw and the truth we did not see" about the building of a stone bridge that is a threatening wonder to the local people. The lie is the myths and legends exploited by the foreign builders to destroy their competitors; the truth is the mercenary nature of their crime. Kadare manages to appeal to a sense of outrage and hunger for evidence even as he suggests the outlines of today's Balkans.

The Club Dumas, by Arturo Pérez-Reverte; translated from the Spanish by Sonia Soto (Harcourt Brace; $23). Corso, a tough-guy bibliophile living in Madrid, is hired by a wealthy client to track down a rare seventeenth-century book on how to summon the Devil. He soon finds himself in a noir metafiction in which he's been cast as D'Artagnan and is threatened by characters suspiciously like Richelieu's agents—a menacing man with a scar and a blonde with a fleur-de-lis tattoo. Even a reader armed with a Latin dictionary and a copy of "The Three Musketeers" cannot anticipate the thrilling twists of this stylish, Escher-like mystery. Either Dumas or the Inquisition is the key to the murders that follow Corso across the Iberian Peninsula to France, but one burning question remains: Who is the fallen angel with green eyes?

The Trials of Maria Barbella, by Idanna Pucci; translated from the Italian by Stefania Fumo (Vintage; $13). In 1895, Maria Barbella, an Italian immigrant seamstress who lived on the Lower East Side, was found guilty of first-degree murder for killing her faithless lover. If the Countess di Brazza—the author's great-grandmother, who was an American married to an Italian noble—hadn't intervened, Maria would have been the first woman to die in the electric chair. The Countess turned Maria's conviction into a cause célèbre and won a new trial, at which the accused was acquitted. Pucci draws from original sources to make her narrative immediate and to create characters with whom we feel intimate. And though more than a century has passed, the book's issues remain: prejudice against immigrants, the inequality of the poor before the law, and capital punishment.

Darwin's Dreampond, by Tijs Goldschmidt; translated from the Dutch by Sherry Marx-Macdonald (M.I.T.; $25). This trenchant, illuminating account of evolutionary disruption is also a hilarious self-portrait of the field biologist as cranky Dutchman. Like Darwin's finches, the fish in Lake Victoria known as *furu* form a species flock—a group isolated enough to produce within itself myriad subtle (and, in the case of the *furu*, kaleidoscopic) variations. At some point, however, according to Goldschmidt, "a man with a bucket" introduced the predatory Nile perch into the lake and wreaked havoc on the ecosystem. The new cash-crop perch that so appalled ecologists was greeted with joy by the local fishermen—one healer called the perch *mkombozi* (Swahili for "savior")—but that is only part of the story.

Café Europa, by Slavenka Drakulić (Norton; $21). A native of Croatia and an international journalist, Drakulić has the privileged perspective of an Easterner with a Western-trained eye. She is at once critical of a culture that remains bleakly conformist in the aftermath of Communist rule and empathetic for its having known nothing else. With consistent equanimity, she examines the frustrating plight of the novice Balkan democracies. On a more quotidian level, too, she finds that much is wanting, measured against Western standards of *richesse*, congeniality, and even taxi service. Owing largely to Drakulić's knack for drawing humor from an abundance of anecdotes—whether about a toothpaste monopoly or the bureaucratic cartwheels required to purchase a vacuum cleaner—these essays read like stories.

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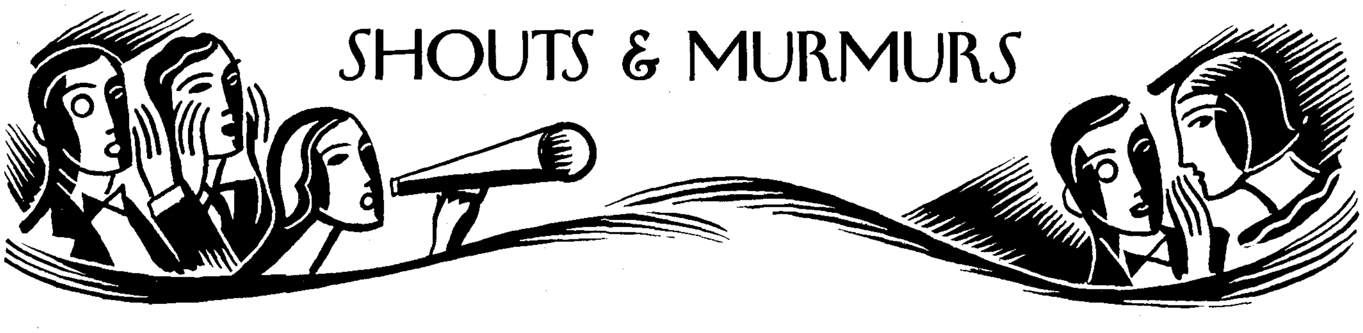


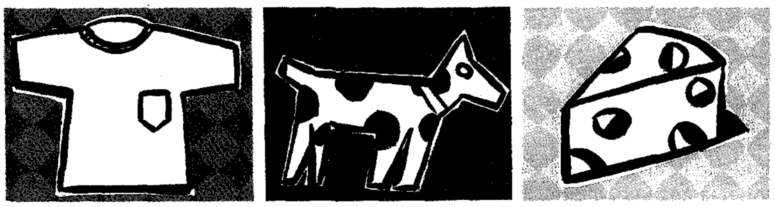
THE POWER OF ONE

BY ANTHONY LANE

THE hopes of the European Union are founded on the Single Currency. By supplementing, and eventually replacing, the various currencies of the member states, it is intended to be the cornerstone of Continental unity. Needless to say, the idea has been nothing but divisive, and it's possible that the entire beautiful dream will vanish up its own wallet and never happen. But why should the dream die? If money can't bring people together, how about something else?

THE SINGLE SHIRT

This should be easy enough. Something in cotton, probably white, with a collar that could be torn off by French agricultural laborers and directors of music videos in Berlin. It will have to be One Size Fits All, like a T-shirt. But what size? Germany's Chancellor Kohl, the prime mover of economic union, has offered one of his own shirts as a prototype. Estimates suggest that it could clothe a family of Sicilian fishermen for a year.



THE SINGLE CHEESE

To search for a cheese that will suit all palates is to bang your head against the charming nonconformism on which Europe prides itself. France, for instance, has more than three thousand varieties of cheese; Norway has just one, the legendary Harjdass, which ripens underground and tastes of styling mousse. Texture is another stumbling block: bureaucrats will struggle to reconcile demand for the rock-like Krackenschnack—traditionally used by Swiss dairy farmers to dash each other's brains out on Michaelmas Eve—with the Gallic devotion to Nez de Mort, a goat-derived product so soft that it is, for all practical purposes, a vapor. The safest option for the Brussels committee would be to pick a homegrown cheese, such as the jolly Socker, which comes wrapped in a ball of blue wax that nobody has ever managed to penetrate.

THE SINGLE DOG

A plenary session of CUR (Canine Uniformity Research) has been sitting in Brussels for three years without success. The brisk, beribboned president, Mme. Froufou, has been unable to reach agreement with her deputy, the loyal and floppy-haired Sir Charles King, on the key issues of muzzle width, slobber density, and pitch of yap, although both parties stress that they are close to a decision on the Single Slipper that will soon be available for cross-border chewing. The session has also called for a moratorium on those East European nations currently applying to join the E.U., on the ground that the introduction of the Hrumf, or Slovakian water mastiff, would upset the delicate balance of negotiations.

THE SINGLE GOD

Tricky. The notion was first mooted over lunch by the late President Mitterrand, who was already ailing and may conceivably have been jockeying for future employment. In principle, it's an inspired move: boil the numerous deities down to one all-purpose being, who could, for example, argue on behalf of Muslim *Gastarbeiter* in Germany. Critics point out, however, that the same God was notionally supported by both sides in the Northern Ireland crisis, and that He hasn't exactly brought *that* one to a speedy conclusion.

THE SINGLE SINGLE

Under a proposed change in the law, everyone in the E.U. will have to marry before the end of the millennium. Soon the only single man left in Europe will be Rodney (Scratcher) Mange of Bracknell, England. From then on, any young European woman who comes of age will be required to meet Mr. Mange for a date at Saddies, a singles bar in west London. The experience will be so traumatic that she will marry shortly afterward purely to get Rodney out of her mind. And thus the moral foundations of European society will be rebuilt. Mr. Mange's female equivalent will be lovely Ana María Magdalena Ignacia de Virginez, from Seville. She is sixty-two, and her favorite drink is water.

THE SINGLE JOKE

A brilliant, time-saving device with pleasing diplomatic overtones: from 1999, no country will be permitted to cast aspersions on the height, diet, driving skills, or sexual stamina of another. A working party met last week to discuss punch lines but ran into trouble almost at once, when Chancellor Kohl mistakenly ate the chicken before it could cross the road.♦

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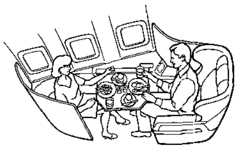

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